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ABSTRACT

Part of a much larger study of the JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills) program, profiles were developed of programs in four communities: San Diego (California); Brooklyn (New York); Philadelphia (Pennsylvania); and Tucson (Arizona), that served welfare clients in innovative and promising ways. The case studies were conducted through site visits between August 1994 and April 1995 and review of program documents. The sites selected focused on programs that have the following characteristics: primarily serve students whose native language is English, incorporate stimulating approaches to instruction, operate at a substantial scale and for a relatively large number of hours per week, and serve significant numbers of welfare recipients. The study identified a number of attributes that all four case study sites share: a clear concept of the educational and other needs of welfare recipients; support for teachers' ongoing efforts to innovate and experiment in the classroom; and adequate funding. Some of the promising practices adopted by the sites include the following: (1) a well-defined mission; (2) separate classes specifically for JOBS students; (3) skilled, experienced teachers; (4) an emphasis on staff development; (5) varied instructional approaches that involve active learning; (6) frequent communication about students' progress between educators and JOBS program staff; (7) a stress on regular attendance, with aggressive follow-up on absences; (8) relatively intensive class schedules; and (9) a high degree of teacher-student and student-student interaction. (10 references) (KC)

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THE JOBS EVALUATION

Educating Welfare Recipients for Employment and Empowerment: Case Studies of Promising Programs

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The JOBS Evaluation

Educating Welfare Recipients for Employment and Empowerment: Case Studies of Promising Programs

U.S. Department of Education
Office of the Under Secretary, Planning and Evaluation Service
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
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1997

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Publications from the JOBS Evaluation

From Welfare to Work. Judith M. Gueron and Edward Pauly. 1991. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

The Saturation Work Initiative Model in San Diego: A Five-Year Follow-up Study. Daniel Friedlander and Gayle Hamilton. 1993. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

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CONTENTS

		Page
Acknowledgments		v
Overview		vi
Chapter		
1	**Introduction**	1
	I. The Purpose of This Report	1
	II. Selecting the Innovative Programs	5
	III. The Methodology of the Case Studies	6
	IV. Program "Promising Practices": An Overview	8
2	**Welfare Education in San Diego: A Profile of Two GAIN Learning Centers**	12
	I. Introduction	12
	II. Education in the San Diego GAIN Program: Origins and Basic Principles	14
	III. Operating GAIN Education: Putting the Principles into Action	18
	IV. The Structure and Process of GAIN Education	22
	V. Innovation in Classes and Curricula	29
	VI. The Changing Role of GAIN Education in San Diego	37
3	**The Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program**	41
	I. Introduction	41
	II. The Origins and Development of BEGIN Education: An Overview	47
	III. Key Elements of the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program	52
	IV. The Brooklyn College Work/Study Program in Action	60
	V. Students' Views of the Program	74
	VI. The Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program in Perspective	76
	Appendix A: Dealing with Multiple Levels of Literacy in the Classroom: The Case of the Brooklyn College Child Care Provider Program	81
4	**Philadelphia's Community Women's Education Project**	85
	I. Introduction	85
	II. CWEP's History and Educational Philosophy	88
	III. Key Program Elements	90
	IV. Inside the Program	95
	V. Putting the Philosophy into Action in Workstart Classes	104
	VI. CWEP as an Advocacy Organization	109

Chapter		Page
5	**The Pima County Adult Education JOBS 20 Program**	112
	I. Introduction	112
	II. The Origin and Design of the JOBS 20 Program	115
	III. Key Program Elements	117
	IV. Inside the Program	123
	V. Facing the Future	133
6	**The Four Programs Compared: Major Differences and Shared "Promising Practices"**	135
	I. Program Differences: Where Work Fits In	135
	II. Common Features and Promising Practices	137
	III. Facing an Uncertain Future	140
References		142

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Finally, we wish to thank the students of these programs, who shared with us their thoughts, achievements, and hopes of making a better life for themselves and their families.

OVERVIEW

Adult education has played a prominent role in state welfare-to-work programs of the early and mid-1990s. Under the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS), the federal welfare-to-work program for recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) enacted by Congress in 1988 and in effect until 1996, states were required to offer recipients education, job training, and employment services, along with support services (e.g., child care, transportation) that enable low-income mothers to go to work or school. For their part, as a condition of receiving assistance, welfare recipients were required to participate in one or more activities intended to move them into the work force. Many recipients were assigned to attend adult education, posing new challenges for the adult education system. These challenges were addressed in a variety of ways by states, communities, and service delivery agencies across the country.

The report profiles programs in four communities that served welfare clients in innovative and promising ways. It is part of a much larger study of the JOBS program being undertaken by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation under contract to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, with additional funding from the United States Department of Education. That larger study seeks to evaluate the impact of JOBS participation on clients' future empoyment, earnings, and welfare receipt, and on the well-being of their children. For this report, the federal government asked MDRC to identify and examine a small number of local programs that provided adult education to JOBS clients in particularly interesting or innovative ways. Both the shared and the unique features of these programs, it was reasoned, might provide lessons to the many other adult education programs that attempt to provide welfare recipients and other highly disadvantaged adults with the skills they need to succeed in the labor market, as parents, and as citizens.

To conduct the case studies, the researchers visited the four sites during the period between August 1994 and April 1995. Spending at least five person-days at each site, they talked with program administrators, teachers, and students, observed classes, and read relevant program documents. To complement the perspective of the adult educators, they also spoke with the welfare agency administrators who were responsible for overseeing the design and operations of adult education programs for JOBS clients and, at three of the four locations, with JOBS case managers as well.

In selecting sites for case studies, the focus was on programs that primarily serve students whose

native language is English, incorporate stimulating approaches to instruction, operate at a substantial scale and for a relatively large number of hours per week, and serve significant numbers of welfare recipients. The programs are:

- In San Diego County, California, the **Vocational Adult Basic Education (VABE)** and **Alternative Learning Service (ALS)** programs operated by the **Mid-City Continuing Education Center of the Community College of San Diego**, and the concurrent vocational and academic training offered by the **South Bay GAIN Laboratory** operated by the **Sweetwater Union High School District**. The VABE and concurrent training programs (24 and 26 weeks long, respectively) are particularly notable for their emphasis on preparing students for immediate employment. The programs combine training in office skills (such as word processing and use of spreadsheet programs) with academic classes that also have a vocational thrust (so that, for example, language skills are taught in the context of preparing a business letter); program staff members also undertake job placement. The ALS program offers a rich array of diagnostic and instructional services to students with learning disabilities. All three programs make extensive (although not exclusive) use of computers.

- In Brooklyn, New York, the **Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program**. This 20-week program, which primarily serves women with relatively low academic skills, is geared toward exposing students to the tasks performed in, and the skills requirements of, occupations in one of several occupational "clusters." Students strengthen their academic skills while learning about employment in the health, clerical, or child care fields, as well as in a fourth broad area of occupations that are nontraditional for women. Students also learn about the workplace by working: students alternate weeks of classroom instruction with weeks in unpaid work experience positions, generally in areas that correspond to their academic classes.

- In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the **Workstart Program** of the **Community Women's Education Project (CWEP)**. This two-semester program is distinctive for its clearly articulated feminist and multicultural perspectives, which permeate classroom activities, and for its emphasis on personal and political empowerment. All classes stress writing as a means of grounding learning in students' own experiences and of enabling them to discover their "voice." Program graduates are encouraged to enroll in community college or to move on to vocational skills training programs.

- In Tucson, Arizona, the **JOBS 20 Program** of **Pima County Adult Education (PCAE)**. JOBS 20 is a solid ABE/GED program that, like Workstart, is concerned with student empowerment; classroom discussions often focus on current events, and teachers try to organize learning around topics in which students are especially interested (e.g., welfare reform, immigration and citizenship). Enhanced JOBS funding has enabled the program to establish computer labs, to hire a part-time counselor-life skills instructor, and to support additional staff development. Students can remain in the program as long as they continue to make satisfactory academic progress.

The report identifies a number of attributes that all four case study sites share, as well as promising practices that have helped to promote a strong educational experience for participants. First, agency administrators had a **clear concept of the educational and other needs of welfare recipients** and gave careful attention to the way in which various program elements would respond to those needs. Second, they have given **support to teachers' ongoing efforts to innovate and experiment** in the classroom. Finally, they have had **adequate funding** at their disposal to put innovative ideas into practice.

Promising practices adopted by the sites include the following:

- **A well-defined mission.** At each site, program personnel share a clear sense of what they are seeking to accomplish, and this understanding shapes their activities.

- **Separate classes specifically for JOBS students.** Such classes have helped to forge a feeling of common identity and a spirit of mutual support among students and have enabled teachers to deliver a uniform message about the role of education in furthering the transition to self-sufficiency.

- **Skilled, experienced teachers.** Supplemental funding from JOBS has enabled the programs to attract such teachers by offering competitive salaries, good working conditions, and (in three of the four locations), full-time positions.

- **An emphasis on staff development.** Teachers are encouraged to increase both their substantive knowledge of their disciplines and their effectiveness as instructors by attending outside classes and seminars and by sharing lessons and teaching strategies with each other.

- **Varied instructional approaches that involve active learning.** To help maintain students' attention and interest, teachers mix individual, whole-class, and small group activities, along with work on computers.

- **Frequent communication about students' progress between educators and JOBS program staff.** Teachers and JOBS case managers keep close track of students and confer frequently about the students' progress and problems.

- **A stress on regular attendance, with aggressive follow-up on absences.** Students who are absent are contacted quickly by education program staff members, by their JOBS case managers, or by both parties, to try to ensure a rapid return to the classroom.

- **Relatively intensive class schedules.** In all the programs, students are in attendance for at least 20 hours a week, and there is relatively little time off task during classes.

- **A high degree of teacher-student and student-student interaction.** Students spend many hours a week in interesting, engaging classroom activities with peers who face similar life situations and in the process come to know each other, and their teachers, very well.

The case studies in this report were carried out while JOBS was in effect. The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 has altered many aspects of the welfare "landscape." With respect to this report, the most notable of these changes is the fact that the new law places far less emphasis on adult education as a required or permitted activity. Nonetheless, the issue of how best to reach large numbers of educationally and economically disadvantaged people with instruction that helps them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to move toward self-sufficiency remains highly relevant. So, too, are the answers provided by the programs examined in these case studies.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I. The Purpose of This Report

This report, commissioned by the U. S. Department of Education and the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, explores the philosophical underpinnings, day-to-day operations, and issues and challenges faced by several innovative, high-quality adult education programs serving welfare recipients under the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) Program, created under the Family Support Act of 1988. Although its specific provisions have largely been superseded by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, the JOBS legislation is especially notable because it embodied the principle of a social contract between government and recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the nation's largest cash assistance program for the poor.[1] JOBS required state and local welfare agencies to offer services that families need to become self-supporting. It also obligated adult AFDC recipients–primarily single heads of households–to participate in activities that would enhance their financial independence.[2]

In enacting JOBS, Congress emphasized the importance of education and vocational training in helping adult AFDC recipients–only 54 percent of whom had a high school diploma or GED in 1991–to attain self-sufficiency. States were required to offer adult education–including preparation for a high school diploma or for taking the General Educational Development (GED) tests, Adult Basic Education

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[1]PRWORA replaces AFDC with a program known as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). This report, which was substantially completed before PRWORA was signed into law in August 1996, retains the terminology of the earlier programs.

[2]Adults required to participate in JOBS were defined as AFDC applicants or recipients aged 20 or older whose youngest child was age 3 or above (or age 1 or above, at state option), unless they met certain specified criteria for an exemption (e.g., the need to provide ongoing care to a sick or disabled child or other relative), or unless state resources did not permit serving all non-exempt persons. Also subject to the participation requirement were the principal earners in AFDC-U (i.e., two-parent) households, regardless of the age of their children. In addition to these adult clients, teenagers were required to participate in JOBS if they were custodial parents aged 16-19 who had not earned a high school diploma or obtained a GED; they were generally obligated to attend education programs leading to one of these credentials. State and local agencies were required to offer specified services and to require participation to the extent that funding was available; service availability was quite limited in some states and localities.

(ABE) to achieve basic literacy and quantitative skills,[3] and instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL)[4]--along with skills training, employment readiness activities, and job development and placement services. The prominent role assigned to education differentiates JOBS from most earlier state and federal welfare-to-work initiatives, which had generally stressed short-term activities oriented toward direct entry into the labor market, such as job search, as well as from the welfare-to-work provisions of PRWORA, which similarly stress immediate job entry.

For their part, welfare recipients could be required to attend school or another JOBS activity regularly, and failure to do so without good cause could result in a reduction of their welfare grant, known as a "sanction" in welfare parlance. This participation mandate posed new challenges for the adult education system. While "traditional" students in adult education programs enrolled in such programs on a voluntary basis and could therefore be presumed to be motivated to learn, such motivation could not be assumed in the case of JOBS students. Like others in adult education, welfare recipients who enrolled in adult education classes had often done poorly in school in the past, and they were sometimes alienated from traditional educational institutions and modes of instruction. Unlike other participants, however, JOBS enrollees may initially have been motivated to attend less by the desire to learn than by the wish to avoid a sanction.[5]

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[3]The term "Adult Basic Education" generally refers to classes for students fluent in English whose literacy or computational ability places them at or below the eighth-grade level.

[4]This is sometimes known as ESOL--English for Speakers of Other Languages.

[5]There is general recognition that a substantial proportion of the AFDC population is educationally disadvantaged, although there is also considerable variation within this population. As a group, AFDC recipients are disadvantaged in terms of their educational *attainment* - i.e., the possession of academic credentials (e.g., a high school or college diploma) that are valued by employers. They are also disadvantaged in terms of educational *achievement* - i.e., the possession of literacy and math skills that may be necessary for workplace performance.

Data from the JOBS Evaluation now being conducted by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) attest to these points. (For details, see Pauly, 1995a.) The evaluation, designed to measure the implementation and effectiveness of different JOBS strategies in seven U.S. communities, contains detailed information on the characteristics and views of welfare recipients. The communities were selected because they were well-suited to answering specific questions posed by Congress and by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services administrators (e.g., because the sites served many welfare recipients, had experience operating welfare-to-work programs, etc.). Across the seven sites, between 36 and 51 percent of the JOBS-mandatory sample members had neither a high school diploma nor a GED credential upon entry into the research sample and were potentially the prime target groups for adult education.

At four of the evaluation sites, the reading and math skills of sample members at program entry were measured by standardized tests. Reading test results varied considerably by site (in part because of the administration of different reading tests). Of the JOBS-mandatory adults without a diploma or GED, 76 percent

(continued...)

Federal legislation and regulations gave states and localities considerable latitude in designing local JOBS programs and in deciding how to implement the JOBS adult education participation requirements. Some of their choices concerned the *purpose*, *content*, and *methods* of adult education for welfare recipients. In this regard, program planners had to decide how much prominence education programs should give to employment-related goals--since the ultimate objective of JOBS was to move welfare recipients into employment--versus such other goals as attainment of a specific credential or general personal and political empowerment. They had to determine how much students' own preferences for work or education should be heeded and the extent to which the curriculum should be vocationally oriented or emphasize work readiness. Other decisions involved the *composition* of the classes: which AFDC recipients should enroll in adult education classes (as opposed to alternative JOBS activities); whether JOBS students should be integrated with other adult education students or served in separate classes; whether class composition should be determined by students' skill levels or by other criteria. Still other decisions entailed the *intensity* and *duration* of educational participation: the number of hours a week for which classes should meet; how students' attendance should be monitored; how long students should be allowed to remain in classes; and what the criteria for their exit should be.

This report examines the choices made and challenges faced by several innovative programs serving JOBS students. These programs are notable both for their similarities and for their differences. All the programs primarily serve students whose native language is English. All have stimulating approaches to instruction, and all operate at a substantial scale and provide a relatively large number of hours of instruction per week. The programs vary, however, in interesting ways, serving different populations and placing greatly varying degrees of emphasis on employment.

Each of the programs is profiled in a separate chapter of the report. The programs are:

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[5](...continued)
had low reading scores at one site; at a second, 54 percent scored low; at a third, 21 percent achieved low scores; and at the last site, 26 percent scored low on the reading test, while another 6 percent could not take the test because they could not read or write English. There was less variation in the math test results - and a generally more discouraging picture. The large majority - between 66 percent and 96 percent - of the JOBS-mandatory adults without a diploma or GED at the four sites had low math scores. Across the sites, less than 10 percent of high school graduates and GED holders had low reading scores; however, 57 percent of this group had low math scores.

The JOBS Evaluation provides only limited information on the proportion of JOBS-mandatory people whose native language is not English and who need English language instruction, since sites were not selected with this objective in mind.

- In San Diego County, California, the **Vocational Adult Basic Education (VABE)** and **Alternative Learning Service (ALS)** programs operated by the **Mid-City Continuing Education Center of the Community College of San Diego**, and the concurrent vocational and academic training offered by the **South Bay GAIN Laboratory** operated by the **Sweetwater Union High School District**. (Because these programs have a common origin and have evolved in similar directions over time, they are considered together in Chapter 2.) The VABE and concurrent training programs (24 and 26 weeks long, respectively) are particularly notable for their emphasis on preparing students for immediate employment. The programs combine training in office skills (such as word processing, filing, and use of spreadsheet programs) with academic classes that also have a vocational thrust (so that, for example, language skills are taught in the context of preparing a business letter); program staff members also undertake job placement. The ALS program, for its part, offers a rich array of diagnostic and instructional services to students with learning disabilities. All three programs make extensive (although not exclusive) use of computers.

- In Brooklyn, New York, the **Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program** (Chapter 3). This 20-week program, which primarily serves women with relatively low academic skills, is geared toward exposing students to the tasks performed in, and the skills requirements of, occupations in one of several occupational "clusters." Students strengthen their academic skills while learning about employment in the health, clerical, or child care fields, as well as in a fourth broad area of occupations that are nontraditional for women. Students also learn about the workplace by working: students alternate weeks of classroom instruction with weeks in unpaid work experience positions, generally in areas that correspond to their academic classes. (A brief description of the Brooklyn College BEGIN Child Care Provider Program is included as an appendix to the chapter.)

- In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the **Workstart Program** of the **Community Women's Education Project (CWEP)** (Chapter 4). This two-semester program is distinctive for its clearly articulated feminist and multicultural perspectives, which permeate classroom activities, and for its emphasis on personal and political empowerment. All classes stress writing as a means of grounding learning in students' own experiences and of enabling them to discover their "voice." Program graduates are encouraged to enroll in community college or to move on to vocational skills training programs.

- In Tucson, Arizona, the **JOBS 20 Program** of **Pima County Adult Education (PCAE)** (Chapter 5). JOBS 20 is a solid ABE/GED program that, like Workstart, is concerned with student empowerment; classroom discussions often focus on current events, and teachers try to organize learning around topics in which students are especially interested (e.g., welfare reform, immigration and citizenship). Enhanced JOBS funding has enabled the program to establish computer labs, to hire a part-time counselor-life skills instructor, and to support additional staff development. Students can remain in the program as long as they continue to make satisfactory academic progress.

How to create a program that would appeal to students was foremost in the minds of the education program administrators who planned the ***GAIN learning centers in San Diego, California***. (GAIN, short for Greater Avenues to Independence, is California's welfare-to-work program, the nation's largest.) The administrators saw GAIN as an opportunity to expand services to a new group of learners. But they recognized that many people in GAIN had done poorly in school in the past and were chary about returning to it.

So they took several steps to alleviate students' anxieties about going back to school. First, they established separate "learning centers" or "laboratories" that were located in areas where large numbers of welfare recipients lived and were convenient to public transportation. In this way, they took adult education for GAIN participants out of the high schools and adult schools that had so often been the settings of past failure.

Second, the administrators set up classes that were exclusively for students in GAIN. The planners reasoned that GAIN students would not have enough attention paid to their special needs if they were mixed in with other adult learners. But in GAIN-only classes, students would be able to get not only solid academic instruction but also attention and nurturing to bolster their self-esteem.

Finally, the planners introduced state-of-the-art computer technology into these classes. Computers were a fresh, new way of learning for most adult welfare recipients--and using computers enabled adult learners to keep up with their children, who were often using computers in *their* classes. Instructional software also allowed each GAIN student to proceed at her own pace. And learning in this way helped students to build the computer literacy important in so many work settings.

The three remaining sections of this introductory chapter consider the process used to select the study sites, describe the methodology employed in conducting the case studies, and provide an overview of the programs' shared "promising practices."

II. Selecting the Innovative Programs

The decision to include San Diego among the four case study sites grew from MDRC's positive findings about student learning gains at that site in evaluating the Greater Avenues to Independence

(GAIN) Program, California's JOBS program. The remaining three case study sites were selected from among 25 programs across the country that had come to the researchers' attention as promising and interesting.

These 25 programs were chosen in two principal ways. First, U. S. Department of Education officials cited several states in which adult education providers had adopted especially innovative practices. MDRC staff then contacted adult education directors in these states; the directors either recommended programs that had come to their attention as being of high quality or suggested other experts, who in turn identified the specific programs. Twenty programs were identified in this way. The remaining five programs had been profiled in various publications.

Representatives from the 25 programs were interviewed by telephone. Department of Education staff members and the researchers used the information gathered in these interviews to select eight sites for one-day "reconnaissance" visits, based on factors such as diversity in program methods, target group, and location. These visits enabled the researchers to sit in on classes and talk with students, teachers, and administrators--and ultimately to recommend that the Department select the Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Tucson sites.

III. The Methodology of the Case Studies

To conduct the case studies, the principal investigator visited all four sites during the period between August 1994 and April 1995; on two of the visits, she was accompanied by a junior-level researcher who had a good deal of prior experience in the field of adult education. A minimum of five person-days was spent at each site.

During these visits, the researchers observed classes for several hours, dividing their observation time among different teachers. They conducted structured interviews with five program directors; talked with other noninstructional staff; spoke informally with teachers and students, both individually and in groups; and questioned the teachers more systematically. The researchers also examined relevant program documents (e.g., statistical and funding reports) and lesson plans.

To complement the perspective of the adult educators and provide a more comprehensive and

How to prepare students with relatively low academic skills for the workplace is the central concern of staff of the ***Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program in Brooklyn, New York***. (BEGIN is the New York City counterpart of GAIN–the City's welfare-to-work initiative.) The Brooklyn College program, as its name suggests, tackles this problem both in the classroom and on the job.

First, it provides instruction to help students build their academic skills in the context of learning about an occupational area of their choice: health care, child care, clerical work, or a fourth "exploratory/nontraditional" occupational cluster. Program instructors selected the health and clerical fields because of expected employer demand in these areas and child care because of recipients' own expressed interest. The Assistant Dean of Brooklyn College was also committed to having interested welfare recipients learn about the opportunities presented by occupations that are nontraditional for women, especially because such occupations often offer high pay and better benefits than do "pink-collar" jobs. The teachers further decided who would cover which cluster and what cross-cutting issues related to work should be addressed in all the clusters. The college provided the teachers with technical assistance in developing curricula and also gave them time to research their chosen fields.

Second, the program provides students with opportunities to learn about work through short-term unpaid work experience (although its staff also includes two job developers who are responsible for helping students find regular, paid employment). Over the program's 20-week duration, students alternate one week of academic skills instruction with a week of work experience at worksites in municipal and nonprofit agencies; whenever possible, students' work experience positions are in the same occupational area as their classes. Worksite learning is also "processed" in the classroom: for example, teachers may ask students to write a composition about an incident or a key lesson learned at their job. And when students develop resumes in class, they can add the experience they have gained in their worksites and give their supervisors as references.

rounded picture, the researchers also spoke with the human services agency administrators who were responsible for overseeing the design and operations of adult education programs for JOBS clients. (In Philadelphia, the researchers interviewed administrators at the Private Industry Council, which runs the city's JOBS Program.) In three of the four locations, they also met with JOBS case managers who were charged with following up on students who were absent and with facilitating their participation in the program (e.g., by arranging support services such as child care and transportation assistance). Other individuals were also interviewed as appropriate.

How to give women a sense of their own power has been the question that administrators and staff of the ***Workstart Program of the Community Women's Education Project in Philadelphia*** have continually asked themselves. What happens in the classroom very much reflects a concern to empower women who often have encountered sexism, racism, and poverty. Thus, students have a key role in shaping many of their classroom activities and in determining policies for the program as a whole.

Writing plays a central part in the curriculum precisely because it is seen as a central means of empowerment, and of grounding students' learning in their own experiences. Through writing, students can explore their feelings and thoughts about people and events in their past and in their present-day lives. And by sharing what they write with fellow students and with teachers, they can gain recognition and affirmation. Writing is not reserved for language arts classes. Two of the three math teachers have students keep a math journal that they submit weekly, and to which the teachers respond. The journal prompts students to think about how they use math in everyday life, while giving teachers feedback on the pace of the class, on specific problems students are having, and on issues in students' lives that may be obstacles to academic performance.

While teachers want students to express and empower themselves through writing, students often want to focus on correct spelling, grammar, and so on. Teachers reconcile these potentially conflicting aims, as well as capitalize on students' interest in writing better, by having students evaluate and proofread their compositions. They say that students generally find the same problems they would themselves.

Teachers try to facilitate learning, but not to be authority figures. (Thus, for example, a math teacher makes deliberate mistakes to get students to use and trust their own knowledge.) Students are encouraged to work in groups and learn from each other; as one student commented, "It's amazing... even though the teachers are great, a lot of times we have a better, easier way to explain...." Teachers strive to create a "safe" environment in which students can express ideas that may be unusual or unpopular; they are, however, quick to refute students' statements that their achievements are a matter of luck or a "miracle," reassuring the women that they are intelligent and can learn.

IV. Program "Promising Practices": An Overview

The programs in San Diego, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Tucson differ substantially in their specific goals and in their mode of operations, as the following chapters make clear. Nonetheless, the programs generally share several general attributes. First, agency administrators had **a clear concept**

How to attract and keep good staff is an issue that administrators of the ***JOBS 20 Program operated by Pima County Adult Education (PCAE) in Tucson, Arizona*** appear to have addressed with considerable success.

According to PCAE's associate director, the first thing members of the hiring committee look for in a prospective staff member is a student-centered approach to instruction; a bachelor's degree, previous adult education experience, and experience in working with low-income people are also required. Teachers are hired through an unusually egalitarian process. The hiring committee, which screens applications and interviews candidates, includes not only professional staff but also paraprofessional and student representatives.

Even though the program's salary scale falls below that of the local school district, other features of the job and the work environment have made it possible for the program to hire highly qualified staff. For one thing, PCAE offers JOBS 20 teachers full-time, full-year positions and an attractive fringe benefit package–conditions uncommon in many adult education programs. For another, JOBS 20 teachers have their own classrooms, so that they don't have to carry books and materials with them from one place to another. A third feature is that each teacher is entitled to 30 hours a week of staff assistance, to be divided as she chooses between a clerical aide (who calls in attendance, handles xeroxing and paperwork, and so on) and an instructional aide, who works in the class with individuals or small groups of students and otherwise helps the teacher.

Teachers in the JOBS 20 program are paid for 36 hours a year of staff development activities; other PCAE teachers are paid for only 24 hours. The JOBS 20 teachers have made full use of staff development opportunities, attending conferences and workshops and taking graduate-level courses relevant to their jobs.

of the educational and other needs of welfare recipients and gave careful attention to the way in which various program elements would respond to those needs. Second, they have given **support to teachers' ongoing efforts to innovate and experiment** in the classroom. Finally, they have had **adequate funding** at their disposal to put innovative ideas into practice.

The programs also have in common a number of elements that have helped to promote a high-quality educational experience for participants. The following "promising practices" are referred to in

the case studies; see the concluding chapter of this report for a detailed description of the findings listed here:

- **A well-defined mission.** All program personnel share a clear sense of what they are seeking to accomplish, and this understanding shapes their classroom activities.

- **Separate classes specifically for JOBS students.** Such classes have helped to forge a feeling of common identity and a spirit of mutual support among students and have enabled teachers to deliver a uniform message about the role of education in furthering the transition to self-sufficiency.

- **Skilled, experienced teachers.** Supplemental funding from JOBS has enabled the programs to attract strong teachers by offering competitive salaries and good working conditions.

- **An emphasis on staff development.** Teachers are encouraged to increase both their substantive knowledge of their disciplines and their effectiveness as instructors by attending outside classes and seminars and by sharing lessons and instructional strategies with each other.

- **Varied instructional approaches that involve active learning.** To help maintain students' attention and interest, teachers mix individual, whole-class, and small group activities, along with work on computers.

- **Frequent communication about students' progress between educators and JOBS program staff.** Teachers and JOBS case managers keep close track of students and confer frequently about the students' progress and problems.

- **A stress on regular attendance, with aggressive follow-up on absences.** Students who are absent are contacted quickly by education program staff members, by their JOBS case managers, or by both parties, to try to ensure a rapid return to the classroom.

- **Relatively intensive class schedules.** In all the programs, students are in attendance for at least 20 hours a week, and there is relatively little time off task during classes.

- **A high degree of teacher-student and student-student interaction.** Students spend many hours a week in interesting, engaging classroom activities with peers who face similar situations and in the process come to know each other, and their teachers, very well.

An important caveat is in order: the conclusions drawn about promising practices derive from operational wisdom rather than from statistical evidence that these practices consistently affect outcomes. Only the San Diego programs have been subject to a careful examination of their impacts on

academic skills and educational attainment–and that evaluation was conducted several years ago. The effectiveness of the other three programs in producing learning gains and enabling clients to secure educational credentials has not been measured. Furthermore, not only is there little evidence on program impacts (i.e., results for program participants vis-a-vis those for similar nonparticipants in a comparison group), often there is little systematic follow-up data on students' post-program employment and earnings and the types of jobs they obtained, and, in some instances, an absence of data on their increases in academic achievement while in the programs.

Nonetheless, the fact that several well-respected programs have adopted similar approaches suggests that these approaches based on lengthy and diverse experiments are valuable and merit more rigorous testing. Moreover, a description of the origins and evolution of these programs, their activities and accomplishments, and the issues they have confronted may help to illuminate the prospects and problems facing programs delivering education to welfare recipients throughout the country.

CHAPTER 2

WELFARE EDUCATION IN SAN DIEGO: A PROFILE OF TWO GAIN LEARNING CENTERS

I. Introduction

California's welfare-to-work program, the Greater Avenues to Independence (GAIN) Program, was implemented in 1986.[1] GAIN was an important precursor to JOBS and, with a few modifications, became the state's JOBS Program in 1989. GAIN's operations and achievements are particularly noteworthy for three reasons: 1) California has the largest AFDC caseload in the nation; 2) GAIN, which operates in all 58 counties of the state, represents an unusually ambitious effort to serve a large portion of that caseload; and 3) GAIN assigns special importance to mandatory upfront education services. According to the GAIN legislation's provisions, welfare recipients who are judged to need these services because they lack a high school diploma or GED, because they have poor literacy and mathematics skills, or because they are not proficient in English are initially required to attend classes to build their basic skills–including both ABE and ESL instruction–or to equip them with a high school diploma or GED.[2] Clients who wish to engage in job search as an alternative up-front activity are permitted to do so; but if they do not find a job, they must then be reassigned to education classes. Mandatory recipients are expected to continue participating in GAIN until they find employment, leave welfare, or are no longer required to do so for other reasons (e.g., a new pregnancy). In San Diego County, a county-wide approach to serving GAIN enrollees was developed that appears to be paying off in terms of both increased educational attainment and achievement. MDRC conducted a study of the impacts of basic education in the GAIN program on GED attainment, basic skills, earnings, and welfare receipt (Martinson and Friedlander, 1994). In four of the five counties studied–including San Diego–individuals judged in need of education and randomly assigned to GAIN were significantly more likely to earn a GED or a high school diploma than were their counterparts who were assigned instead to a control

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[1]The specific state and local welfare policies and provisions described in this chapter, which were in place when the case study was carried out, are likely to change with the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

[2]As discussed below, about three years ago San Diego was granted a waiver allowing GAIN to assign those in need of education to job search as their first component.

group.[3] In San Diego there was a relatively modest 4 percentage point difference between treatment and control group outcomes on this measure. In San Diego County alone, those in the GAIN group were also more likely to register significant and sizable improvements in basic skills levels, as measured by their scores on the "document literacy" and "quantitative literacy" parts of the Tests of Applied Literacy Skills (TALS) developed by the Educational Testing Service. These educational impacts did not translate into welfare and employment impacts over the two-year follow-up period, however.[4]

This chapter focuses on two of the county's ten GAIN learning centers:

- The **Mid-City Continuing Education Center**, one of three GAIN learning centers run by the San Diego Community College District. Primarily serving residents of a low-income area of San Diego, Mid-City provides GAIN students with instruction in ABE, GED, and ESL, offers a vocationally-oriented ABE class, and also has a special Alternative Learning Services (ALS) lab for learning disabled GAIN students. The Continuing Education Center has a capacity of 208 GAIN students at a given time.

- The **South Bay GAIN Lab**, one of two GAIN learning centers operated by the Sweetwater Union High School District. South Bay serves residents of several cities in the southern part of the county, offers instruction in ESL, GED, and office skills (an ABE instructor's position was vacant at the time of the visit), and has a capacity of 123 students.

These two centers were selected for study after consultation with the GAIN education deliverers because they have pioneered the development of programs in San Diego County that bring together instruction in academic subjects and in vocational skills. Relatively uncommon in other California counties, the practice of offering GAIN students academic and vocational instruction concurrently is growing in San Diego County. Four of the county's six education districts serving GAIN clients now operate "concurrent" programs; among these four, Mid-City and Sweetwater have the largest and most comprehensive skills training offerings.

There are both advantages and drawbacks in focusing closely on selected education providers, rather than painting a broad-brushstroke picture of all the GAIN education providers in San Diego

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[3]In this paper, the term "significant" is used to refer to the concept of *statistical significance*, that is, the likelihood that a difference in outcomes between two groups did not arise by chance.

[4]It is important to note that the Martinson and Friedlander report tracks a group of individuals who became part of the research sample between March 1988 and June 1990, i.e., several years before this case study was conducted. Because GAIN education in San Diego County has undergone change over time, as has the AFDC caseload, it is impossible to know whether the impacts found in that study would be matched (or possibly exceeded) if the study were replicated with present-day GAIN enrollees.

County. The most obvious disadvantage is that no two providers will be fully representative of all the institutions that deliver GAIN education throughout the county. However, the case study identifies a number of elements that characterize all the San Diego learning centers, as well as addressing interesting adaptations made by the study sites.

The chapter is divided into six sections. The next section establishes the context for the remainder of the discussion by examining the early history and the basic principles that underlie the design and operation of the GAIN education component in San Diego, and the third section looks at the way in which these principles have been translated into practice in the two learning centers under study. The fourth section explores the current structure of GAIN education–the processes by which new students are admitted to the program and their attendance and progress are monitored–while the fifth section considers the development of new classes and curricula, including ones that are more vocationally oriented; it also analyzes the issues associated with these efforts. The chapter closes with a discussion of the changing role of GAIN education in San Diego and a discussion of its changing role.

Two themes have characterized the delivery of education services to welfare recipients in San Diego since GAIN's inception and continue to be of critical importance for understanding the initiative.

- From the beginning, school administrators have taken an entrepreneurial attitude, regarding the new funding provided by GAIN as an opportunity to expand their scope of services and to introduce improved measures for reaching this new group of learners.

- While operating within a common framework established by the GAIN guidelines, the GAIN education providers have continued to innovate and to introduce changes at the level of the individual school.

Thus, the story in San Diego is one of flexibility and diversity, with considerable variation from one learning center to another but with a continuing focus on altering programs to help more GAIN students succeed in adult education.

II. Education in the San Diego GAIN Program: Origins and Basic Principles

A. Early History

Immediately upon passage of GAIN by the California state legislature, representatives from two school districts, the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) and the Sweetwater Union High School District, approached the County Department of Social Services (DSS) unsolicited, saying that

they wanted to work with DSS as active partners on the new initiative. (The GAIN legislation specified that public institutions be given the first opportunity to enlist as education providers, but left the door open for community-based organizations to supply these services.) According to the assistant superintendent of the Sweetwater District, one of the two education administrators who was "present at the creation," he and his counterpart from SDCCD recognized that what made GAIN distinctive was its emphasis on basic education. Further, they saw an opportunity to do things differently and to create a high-quality education component that would be the linchpin of the new welfare-to-work initiative.

Together the SDCCD and Sweetwater districts accounted for about three-quarters of all the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) revenues expended on behalf of AFDC recipients in the county.[5] Nonetheless, the two administrators recognized a need to involve the other five education districts in the County that were potential GAIN education providers, thereby enabling DSS to negotiate with a single entity, not several disparate providers. One of the five education districts opted not to participate because of the very small number of welfare recipients in the district. The other four districts (Escondido Union High School District, Grossmont Union High School District, Vista Unified School District, and MiraCosta Community College District) joined together to form the GAIN Remediation Adult Deliverers (GRAD) Consortium.[6] Initially, GRAD met weekly; now, eight years after it was first established, it continues to meet a minimum of once a month. Voting members of the GRAD Consortium include representatives from each of the six districts; each district, regardless of size, has one vote. According to one informant, decisions are generally reached after the issues have been discussed at length, leading to a consensus. Representatives of the DSS and the San Diego Consortium (the local Private Industry Council that administers monies under the Job Training Partnership Act, or JTPA)[7] attend GRAD meetings but do not vote. There is wide agreement that GRAD has been a critical instrument of change--a forum for making high-level decisions, developing common policies (so that,

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[5]A district's Average Daily Attendance revenues reflect both the number of students enrolled and the number of hours each student actually attends.

[6]Interestingly, GAIN education providers include both community college districts and school districts. This is the case because, some years before GAIN was enacted, two of the school districts (including the San Diego Unified School District) ceded operation of the adult schools (except for high school and GED preparation for students under 18) to the community colleges in those districts. Despite the different regulations governing the school and community college systems, there is wide agreement that cooperation between the two has been excellent.

[7]The San Diego Consortium is also known as the Regional Employment and Training Consortium. JTPA has played an important role in funding GAIN education activities; by state law, 50 percent of the JTPA "8 percent" monies for education agencies must be earmarked for GAIN or other welfare clients.

e.g., all the education providers operate under similar contractual terms), and sharing information about successful approaches.[8]

From the beginning, the designers of the education component in San Diego GAIN stressed the importance of using GAIN funding to put in place several fundamental principles and practices, the rationale for which is explained in the following section. These principles, as explained by interview respondents and distilled by the researcher, are:

- **stand-alone GAIN learning centers;**
- **GAIN-only classes;**
- **intensive use of computer-assisted instruction; and**
- **well-qualified teaching staff.**

The plan the educators proposed was very different than what DSS had anticipated--that GAIN clients would simply enroll in already-existing adult schools--and also much costlier. Consequently, negotiating an agreement between the education providers and the County DSS proved a time-consuming, difficult, and highly political process that took over a year; the California Department of Social Services then had to approve the agreement. Eventually, the state DSS agreed to provide $65,000 in start-up costs for each of the new learning labs to pay for hardware and software costs.

The financial partnership worked out in 1988, once the labs were under way, remained essentially in force at the time the site was visited, although the relative contributions of the various parties have changed over time. (The PIC, for example, has assumed increasing importance as a funding source as DSS has been strapped for funds.) Teachers' salaries are paid for by ADA funds; these, in turn, are federal JOBS monies that are funneled through the State Department of Education. The PIC has funded hardware upgrades, software, books, supplies, and equipment costs, as well as the cost of teacher aides, for several of the learning centers. JTPA also funds the position of at least one instructor at the two learning centers under study. DSS has paid for data collecting and reporting, clerical assistance, and other costs to the schools arising specifically from the delivery of services to GAIN enrollees.[9]

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[8]GRAD members have provided technical assistance to other communities in the state in setting up similar consortia.

[9]It is worth noting that shortly after GRAD was formed, using JTPA funds, SDCCD and Sweetwater began planning to set up pilot learning "labs" using computer-assisted instruction (CAI). Two such labs opened in January 1987; a third opened at the end of that year. These three pilot centers offered an opportunity to work

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B. Guiding Principles

The four main principles guiding the GAIN education deliverers in San Diego shared a general objective: to create a radically different learning environment for GAIN students than they were presumed to have experienced in their earlier school years.

1. Take education out of its "traditional" setting; make it both physically and psychologically accessible. The goal was to remove education from its association with high school and with other settings where many GAIN students experienced academic failure. In creating separate classroom complexes ("learning centers" or "laboratories") in convenient locations in the City of San Diego itself and in the northern, southern, and eastern parts of the county, the educators sought to give students the feeling of making a fresh start.

2. Serve GAIN students in GAIN-only classrooms. Educators were concerned with creating a caring, nurturing environment for students, the majority of whom were believed to suffer from low self-esteem. It was reasoned that if GAIN students were "mainstreamed" with other adult learners, they would not receive the attention they needed. Also, special resources (see below) could be focused on GAIN-only classes. (The drawback of this approach, however, is that if classes have too few GAIN students, their economic viability may be compromised, since teachers' salaries are financed on the basis of ADA, an issue discussed later in this document.)

3. Introduce state-of-the-art learning technology, with an emphasis on computers. Computer-assisted instruction was seen as having many advantages. First, most GAIN recipients had little previous exposure to computers, which represented a new and fresh way of learning–and one with which some students' children were already familiar. Second, computers permitted more individualized instruction, allowing students to proceed at their own pace without embarrassment and enabling more students to be reached at once. Third, in the course of developing greater academic proficiency, students could simultaneously develop computer literacy, learning keyboarding skills that would be useful in work settings. Finally, the introduction into GAIN classes of computers, which, as discussed below, were purchased by JTPA funds, was a low-cost opportunity for the school systems to upgrade their computer capacity, with potential spillover effects for non-GAIN teachers and students as well.

4. Use financial incentives to help attract well-qualified instructors. Administrators were aware of the common practice of assigning the less capable or more "burnt-out" teachers to poorer students, and they were determined to do just the reverse. Instead, as discussed below, they used

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[9](...continued)
out instructional and referral procedures before GAIN began to operate on a large-scale.

economic incentives to induce dedicated teachers to join the GAIN instructional team.

III. Operating GAIN Education: Putting the Principles into Action

Observations and interviews conducted during the site visit afforded an opportunity to see how the sites have operationalized the basic principles underlying the program. Fundamentally, they suggest that adherence to these principles has been reasonably consistent, but not automatic.

Separate learning centers. During the years following implementation of GAIN, the six education districts have operated as many as 18 separate learning centers; the precise number has varied from year to year. After some consolidation, learning centers now exist in ten locations: three are operated by SDCCD, two each by the Sweetwater and Grossmont Union High School Districts, and one each by the remaining three districts.

The learning centers are located in settings that are convenient for and congenial to adult learners. The Mid-City Center occupies several classrooms and offices in a large building that is a continuing education center of the San Diego community college system; it is located in a small shopping center with many Vietnamese-owned stores. The South Bay center is a free-standing suite of offices and classrooms that is located in a small industrial park.

The locations were also chosen in part because of their easy access to public transportation. Thus, the South Bay lab is located a couple of blocks away from the San Diego "trolley," a rapid transit system that connects downtown San Diego with outlying communities. The Mid-City Center is located in an area with a high concentration of low-income housing, where many new immigrants and welfare recipients live.[10] The associate dean of the Center, who is charged with oversight of the GAIN education program there, commented on the building's lack of comforts--many classrooms lack windows, and the air conditioning system is erratic--but opined that it would be inappropriate to require people to travel a considerable distance across town simply to attend class in a nicer building.

GAIN-only classes. In many other California counties, GAIN enrollees attend classes at adult schools or community-based organizations (CBOs), mixed in with students who are not on welfare. In contrast, all students at the South Bay lab are GAIN enrollees.

At Mid-City, the situation is more complex, although there, too, the majority of GAIN students

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[10]Other centers are located, for example, on the campus of a technical college and in a shopping mall; one is collocated with a DSS office.

are in GAIN-only classrooms. There are several exceptions, however. First, because of the very large need for both GAIN and non-GAIN ESL services at the site and because students are extremely varied in their degree of English proficiency, GAIN enrollees with very limited English are enrolled in mixed (i.e., GAIN and non-GAIN) ESL classes offered by the Continuing Education Center. The GAIN-only ESL class is reserved for students at higher levels of language functioning, to allow the teacher to devise suitable group activities for the class as a whole. (The GAIN ESL class is unusually large: it has a capacity of 70, compared with 38 in the ABE and GED classes.) Second, GAIN ABE students entering at the fourth-grade level or below are also placed in classes where they are mixed with non-GAIN students. Third, as discussed below, students in the GAIN Vocational ABE (VABE) class take academic instruction as a group but then move into office skills classes where they are integrated with non-GAIN students. Finally, a few non-GAIN students join GAIN students in the Alternative Learning Services Lab.

All of these modifications have enabled GAIN students to take advantage of the wide array of learning resources offered by the Mid-City Continuing Education Center and to receive instruction that is targeted to their level of academic attainment. Although deviating from the principle of serving GAIN students in GAIN-only classrooms, these adaptations would also appear to serve the best educational interests of the GAIN population while making for increased efficiency.

Computer-assisted instruction. All the GAIN classrooms are well equipped with computers, and teachers and instructional aides appear to be comfortable and adept with various software packages. Teachers have a say in the software they wish to use; thus, a single software system is not used across all learning centers. Rather, software packages vary from center to center, and also vary from one class to another in the same center. (For example, at Mid-City, the Vocational ABE class uses software developed by WASATCH Educational Systems, Paradigm, and Skills Bank; the regular GAIN ABE class uses WICAT, Network, CBC math, and Harley Star Courseware packages, among others.) In ESL, ABE, and GED classes, computers are used principally for basic skills instruction; in the classes that combine academic and vocational instruction (Vocational ABE at Mid-City and the concurrent program at South Bay), they are used to teach both basic and job-related skills.

While computer-assisted instruction is used in all classes, in none is it the sole learning technology employed. Rather, the degree to which computers are used varies with the beliefs and preferences of the instructors. Thus, for example, the instructor in Mid-City's ALS Lab for learning-

disabled students notes that students spend only 20-30 percent of their time on computers. He does not permit students to use the machines until they are adept readers, arguing that students do not have to be able to read to get through most instructional software packages; if they guess often enough, they will get the answers right, undermining the software's teaching effectiveness. However, he does use computers to familiarize students with word processing. Similarly, the GED instructor at South Bay reports that students spend about an hour and a half a day (out of almost five hours) on the computer. She says that she wants the computer to reinforce learning, not to be the principal instructional method. Rather, she believes that students need personal contact with her and that the lecture style she favors affords that contact, as well as affording students an opportunity to ask questions. She says she also uses cooperative learning approaches.

Nonetheless, among seven instructors surveyed, five of them ranked computers as among the three types of instructional materials they used most often. Computers clearly play an important role in the GAIN learning centers, although they do not, perhaps, have the "star billing" that the designers of the GAIN education component intended for them. Furthermore, according to the dean at Mid-City, GAIN has guided the entire community college district in terms of adopting technology for instructional purposes.

Well-qualified teachers. The two districts under study have used economic incentives to attract teachers of high quality. In the Sweetwater Union School District, regular adult teachers are contracted to teach a fixed 184 days a year; GAIN instructors, in contrast, can choose the number of days they want to teach, from 184 to a maximum of 215, and the GAIN teachers at South Bay teach year-round. At Mid-City, GAIN teachers were offered a regular full-time contract, a rarity in the community college system, where most teachers are hired as "adjuncts" (part-time staff). (According to one informant, there are ten adjunct staff members for every contract staff member at the college.) In both settings, GAIN teachers also receive a full fringe benefit package, another rarity among adult education instructors (although part-time instructors in the San Diego Community College District also receive such benefits).

By making the GAIN teaching positions financially rewarding, the schools were able to induce many teachers to apply for the openings and to fill the slots with experienced instructors. Thus, the seven GAIN instructors surveyed at the two learning centers average 12 years' experience in teaching adults, and all of the instructors at Mid-City hold master's degrees. (In terms of other characteristics, six of the seven teachers are women, six are aged 46 or older, and all but one–a Hispanic female–are

white and non-Hispanic.[11]) The attractive financial packages have also been credited with keeping turnover low: six of the seven instructors have been with GAIN for at least four years.

Although harder to measure, GAIN teachers also appear to be innovative and sensitive to the problems and needs of low-income students. And they believe in their own effectiveness: six of the seven characterize the large majority of their students as "eager to learn" after they have been in the class a few weeks, and all strongly agree that they are making a difference in the lives of their students.[12]

At both Mid-City and South Bay, the spirit of camaraderie and teamwork among GAIN teachers is evident in both routine interactions and formal meetings; the teachers often consult one another and seem genuinely to enjoy working together. The teachers also express quite positive attitudes toward the school administration: they view the administrators as at least reasonably aware of the problems they face and as very supportive and encouraging of their efforts.[13]

At both schools, administrators say that teachers share a sense of "mission" and purpose. This is abetted in part by the fact that teachers and students have clearly specified goals and that students' progress toward those goals is routinely measured, as discussed below. A further consideration is that because students are required to attend for several hours each day, teachers get to know their individual strengths and weaknesses.

A complicating consideration is the fact that while GAIN is a year-round program--a key adaptation the education providers were required to make--GAIN teachers do not always want to teach during the summer. Thus, at Mid-City, only two of the five GAIN summer classes were being taught by their regular, full-time instructors during the researcher's August field visit. Two classes were taught by non-GAIN instructors from the center, while the teacher in the regular GAIN ABE class substituted

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[11]The administrators at both learning centers are white males.

[12]On the survey, administered to the GAIN instructors, they were asked, "After GAIN students have been in your class for a few weeks, how many would you characterize as 'eager to learn?'" on a 1 to 7 scale, with 1 indicating "very few" and 7 indicating "most." Six of the seven respondents gave 6 or 7 as their response. Furthermore, teachers were asked the extent to which they agreed with the statement, "I am certain I am making a difference in the lives of my students" on a 1 to 7 scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 7 indicating strong agreement. All seven respondents answered this question with a rating of 6 or 7.

[13]On the instructor survey, teachers were asked how much they agreed with the statement, "The program's administration knows the problems faced by the staff"; the average rating was 5 on a scale of 1 to 7, indicating moderate agreement. On a question ascertaining the extent of agreement with the statement, "The program administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging," the average response was 6.3 on the same 1 to 7 scale.

as the VABE instructor over the summer.[14] The associate dean explains that GAIN is more stressful than ordinary teaching positions for many reasons--students are mandatory and may be less motivated, the school day is longer, more coordination with outside agencies is demanded, teachers are more accountable and subject to intensive scrutiny--and that it is therefore necessary to plan for systematic breaks for the teaching staff. In his view, having non-GAIN teachers substitute in the GAIN classrooms during the summer may actually be an advantage because it provides these teachers with "cross-training" and helps to ensure that GAIN does not function in isolation from the rest of the college. However, given the emphasis on securing very skilled instructors for the GAIN classes, it is at least reasonable to raise the question whether students are being educationally short-changed during the summer months.

IV. The Structure and Process of GAIN Education

A. The Referral and Intake Process

The GAIN program begins at the welfare ("income maintenance") office when an individual applies for AFDC or, alternatively, when her eligibility to receive public assistance is redetermined. (Female pronouns are used in this paper in referring to AFDC recipients, since the large majority of welfare households are headed by women.) At that point, her eligibility for GAIN is also assessed. Participation in GAIN is mandatory for single parents with children aged three and above, unless some unusual circumstance (e.g., the need to care for a disabled relative) warrants an exemption; it is also required in two-parent households receiving welfare (AFDC-UP) because the principal wage-earner is unemployed. Before GAIN was adapted to become California's JOBS Program, it required participation only of parents with children aged six and above, although women with younger children could volunteer. In accordance with the JOBS legislation, GAIN now mandates participation for parents of three- to five-year-olds as well; however, single parents whose youngest child is between the ages of three and five may be required to participate only 20 hours a week (although they may elect to participate more), rather than to meet the full-time obligation of 25 hours a week imposed on those with older children. Teenage parents without a high school diploma or GED are also required to attend school,

[14]However, the two GAIN teachers who were on vacation did come to the site during the researcher's visit to attend meetings and to complete the teacher survey.

regardless of the age of their children.[15]

Once an individual has been determined to be mandatory for GAIN (or has volunteered for the program), she attends a GAIN orientation and appraisal. As part of that appraisal, she takes a 30-minute reading and 20-minute mathematics Appraisal Test developed by the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), a nonprofit organization based in San Diego. An individual is determined to be "in need of basic education" if she scores less than 215 on either the reading or mathematics GAIN Appraisal Test. (For those for whom English is a second language, the cut-off score is 215 on the reading or listening parts of a special CASAS test for speakers of other languages.) The new registrant is also interviewed by a GAIN case manager, who reviews her background, assesses any circumstances that might prevent her from participating in GAIN, and determines a preliminary employment goal. The registrant is then either assigned by the case manager to a GAIN activity or "deferred" (i.e., temporarily excused from participating); she may also receive assistance with child care and transportation if she needs it.[16]

The learning centers accept new students into ABE, GED, and ESL classes weekly. (In contrast, new students are admitted to the VABE classes only once a month.)[17] Teachers regard the GAIN Appraisal Tests as inadequate for indicating whether a student should be placed in the ABE or GED class--a critical decision, since these classes have different contractually-specified performance goals--or what her specific skill deficits are and at what instructional level she should begin. On the day of intake, new entrants are therefore retested using the CASAS Survey Achievement Tests and the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE).[18] Within two weeks after the student starts classes, a formal decision

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[15]Since the focus of this paper is on services to adult learners, teen parents are discussed only incidentally. It is worth noting, however, that education instructors and administrators speak of the difficulty of engaging this population because of the students' immaturity, their inability to plan (or see) ahead, and the multiple problems they confront. A Mid-City counselor leads a weekly group that focuses on such topics as goal-setting and conflict resolution that was originally designed specifically to address the needs of teen parents; the counseling sessions have subsequently been opened to other ABE students as well.

[16]Typically, GAIN case managers refer clients who need child care to resource and referral organizations that can help clients find specific providers with available slots. GAIN also pays for child care services if necessary.

[17]Neither Mid-City nor South Bay currently has a waiting list for ABE, GED, or ESL classes (although there is a waiting list of one or two months for entry into VABE).

[18]The CASAS Survey Achievement Tests seek to assess a student's ability to apply basic reading skills in everyday life situations; most items assess literal comprehension and do not require inferences or evaluation. There are several levels, including those for developmentally disabled students and for beginning, intermediate, (continued...)

is reached on the level at which she should be enrolled, and this decision is reported back to DSS.

B. Inside the Classroom

It is impossible to describe in detail a day in a "typical" GAIN education classroom at either Mid-City or South Bay because every teacher runs her class differently. Indeed, on the teacher survey, most teachers reported that they always or almost always make their own decisions about selecting textbooks and other curriculum materials, topics and skills to be taught, and teaching techniques. Accordingly, they give varying degrees of emphasis to different kinds of instructional materials and modalities. Some teachers, for example, make considerable use of published textbooks, while others do not; some teachers say that they provide a good deal of one-on-one instruction, while others said they provide almost none.

Nonetheless, several generalizations can be drawn.

- **All teachers say that they use a variety of teaching modalities.** These include working with small groups of students, whole-class teaching, computer-assisted instruction, individualized assignments or workbooks, and cooperative learning.

- **In all classes students have at least some, and often frequent, choices about just which activities they will do on any given day.** Together, these two features of life in the classroom may help to prevent students' boredom and fatigue.

- **At any given time, most students seem to be "on-task," paying close attention to the materials before them.**[19] Even when students and teachers laugh and joke together, it usually appears to be in the context of serious learning.

- **Teachers are concerned about creating a supportive environment for students as well as delivering educational content.** Five of the seven teachers say that they have had one-to-one conversations with all of their students about the students' past educational experiences, educational goals, or attendance or progress in class; the other two say they have had such conversations with over half their students. Six of the seven teachers report that they have spoken with at least half their students about the students' personal lives as well. All the teachers believe that students in their class often or very often form close friendships and support networks with each other. And all the teachers said that their classes celebrate special occasions (e.g., graduations and

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[18](...continued)
and moderately advanced adult basic education students. The test is untimed; most students finish within 60 minutes. The ABLE, whose purpose is to measure basic education skills of adults, has three levels, each with five or six sections covering vocabulary, reading comprehension (including drawing inferences and conclusions), spelling, language (i.e., grammar), numbers operations, and mathematical problem-solving. Each section is untimed but usually takes 20-35 minutes to complete.

[19]This generalization is admittedly based on somewhat limited observation.

birthdays) sometimes or often.

- **A general emphasis on employment preparation imbues instruction in all classes.** Thus, for example, all the teachers, whether they teach classes with a specific vocational focus or not, say that they teach students how to read and reply to employment ads and how to complete application forms. Similarly, all report that they teach students to apply math skills to work-related problems, use reading materials about work situations, and cover job-appropriate dress and grooming. ESL instructors often teach general functional skills (e.g., asking for clarification, asking directions) in a workplace context. In one ESL class that was observed, for example, general skills–asking for feedback and responding to criticism–were taught in the context of asking a supervisor about whether a task had been performed in a satisfactory manner. Students first repeated a standard script en masse, then rehearsed it in pairs before the entire class, and finally made up their own dialogues that applied the standard formula to work-related situations of their own invention.[20]

C. Monitoring Students' Attendance and Progress

Close monitoring of attendance. Attendance is a high priority for both DSS (because of GAIN's mandatory nature) and the schools (because attendance affects ADA revenues). Attendance in the GAIN education classes is closely monitored, and absenteeism receives a swift response. State regulations require GAIN students to attend 25 hours a week. Classes are conducted Monday-Friday, and through the summer months as well (not always the case in JOBS education programs). At Mid-City, classes meet between 8:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.; because of lunch and mid-morning breaks, students are scheduled to spend 22.5 hours a week in classes. The school day at South Bay is slightly longer (from 8:30 a.m. until 2:10 p.m.) and breaks slightly shorter, so that students are scheduled to spend almost 24.5 hours a week in class.

Attendance is taken daily; students sign-in either in their classes (Mid-City) or when they enter the building (South Bay). Especially at South Bay, teachers encourage good attendance through rewards and incentives: certificates of perfect attendance, coupons for discounts and "freebies" that the teachers solicit from local businesses, etc. At Mid-City, use of incentives varies with individual classroom teachers.

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[20]This vocational emphasis might be contrasted with an approach that seeks primarily to develop more generally students' imagination, their enjoyment of learning, or their awareness of social and political issues. Thus, for example, only two of the seven teachers say that they include novels and short stories among their instructional materials; one of these teaches students with learning difficulties and regards the availability of high-interest reading matter for such students as essential. Five of the seven report using newspapers or magazines in teaching, but only the instructor of learning-different students uses these materials frequently.

Throughout San Diego County, schools formally submit the attendance records of GAIN clients to DSS once a month.

The critical role of the ESW. Despite the fact that attendance is formally reported to GAIN only monthly, there is extensive informal contact between the GAIN learning centers and DSS, mediated through the Education Social Workers (ESW)s, who are DSS employees. At Mid-City, the ESW's caseload includes all students enrolled in the GED and ABE classes; there are two ESWs assigned to the South Bay lab. The ESWs, while not outstationed at the learning centers, visit them frequently: the Mid-City ESW is at the site four days a week, the South Bay ESWs twice a week. While there, they review daily attendance data, talk with teachers about students who are having problems, and meet with the students themselves. They also follow up on absentees, calling them by phone immediately upon learning of their absence and making home visits if necessary (as is frequently the case because clients often move or have their phone service disconnected).[21]

There is wide agreement that the ESWs play a crucial role in fostering not only improved attendance among students but also open communication between the schools and DSS. Indeed, when some years ago DSS sought to eliminate the ESW position for budgetary reasons, opposition from the schools led the agency to reverse this position. According to one ESW, a good Education Social Worker is "compassionate but not a molly-coddler." The ESWs seek to intervene early to resolve problems (e.g., disruptions in child care arrangements) that interfere with attendance. They side with the schools in emphasizing to students the importance of good attendance and the consequences of non-attendance and share information that may be helpful to instructors in dealing with individual students. This is deemed especially important given the fact that participation is relatively long-term (lasting for several months, rather than the few weeks involved in job search), and that students' motivation may flag during this period. One ESW commented that she has received letters and cards from students thanking her for "pushing" them to attend regularly. At the same time, the ESWs may act as advocates for students as well. The same ESW related that she had arranged a student's transfer to another class because the

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[21]At Mid-City, it is primarily the ESW who performs this function. At South Bay, the school secretary also starts to call absent students within half an hour after the school day has begun. She urges them to come in at some point during the day: if a student says she has an appointment, the secretary will ask her to come in afterward, or if she says she is feeling ill, the secretary will suggest that she come in later in the day if she is feeling better. These calls emphasize the importance of regular attendance, but if a student attends only for part of a day, there are also positive financial benefits to the school, since ADA is calculated on the basis of attendance hours, not days.

teacher in the class to which she had been assigned displayed animosity toward her--in the view of both the student and the ESW, who came to observe the class and assess the accuracy of the student's complaint.

Use of the sanctioning process. If a student fails to attend as required, the ESW starts the process that ultimately can lead to a sanction. That process begins by calling the student in for a "determination"--a meeting between student and ESW to determine whether the student was absent with or without good cause. If she was absent without good cause, she will be asked to sign a "conciliation agreement" that specifies that she will attend regularly and on time, as well as call both the school and the ESW if she will be absent. If the student fails to comply with this agreement, a sanction may be put in place.[22] Although the first sanction can readily be "cured" (reversed) when the student resumes attendance, the second cannot, and the grant remains reduced for three months; with a third sanction, the grant is reduced for six months.

Management information system data maintained by GAIN indicated that GAIN students in the San Diego Community College District attended 74 percent of scheduled hours during a recent 12-month period; in the Sweetwater Union High School District, they attended 88 percent of scheduled hours. However, sanctioning is rare: the ESW interviewed estimated that only 3 percent of the sanction processes she initiates actually result in grant reductions. The instructors and the ESW seem satisfied that absenteeism, when it occurs, generally has a "good cause" explanation.[23] Furthermore, the ESW will grant participants one-month deferrals to deal with particular problems. It appears that sanctions are levied primarily against GAIN enrollees who never appear at the schools at all, or who never respond to the ESWs' efforts to contact them.

Assessing progress through performance standards. There are no formal limits on length of stay in ABE or GED classes; students may remain in these components indefinitely as long as, in the opinion of the instructor and ESW, they are continuing to make progress. However, the terms of the schools' contracts with the San Diego Consortium (PIC) state that specified levels of attainment or achievement will be reached within specified time periods. Thus, for example, the contracts state that

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[22]The GAIN sanction is calculated by reducing the grant for a household of a given size by one person. For a family of three, e.g., the grant is reduced from $607 to $490, the regular grant for a family of two; thus, the amount of the sanction is $117.

[23]The ESW reported that students face a number of problems interfering with attendance including: health, child care, transportation difficulties, domestic violence, and eviction. She also commented that clients often lack the coping skills needed to deal with these problems effectively.

after 600 hours of instruction, 80 percent of the participants enrolled in GED classes will take and pass the GED test. They also specify that at 400 hours of instruction, 80 percent of the participants enrolled in ABE will have gained five points on either the reading or math GAIN Appraisal Test and/or achieved the educational goal of scoring 215 points on that test, and that at 800 hours of instruction, 80 percent of the participants enrolled in ABE will have achieved the educational goal. These performance standards give teachers highly specific targets toward which to aim.

In order to assess their progress, students are regularly tested after about 200 hours of actual instruction (i.e., approximately every two months); the results are reported to GAIN. Students who complete a GED or meet the ABE goal are referred back to GAIN for reassignment to another component, usually job search. Upon the teacher's recommendation, the GAIN case manager may reassign an ABE "graduate" to GED preparation or, at Mid-City, to the VABE class, but such recommendations are by no means automatic. The 215-point skill level defining completion of ABE equates to the 6th- or 7th-grade level, according to the associate dean at Mid-City, while students are generally required to read at the 8th- or 9th-grade level to be admitted to GED classes. Moreover, in the dean's view, continued participation in an education program may not be beneficial to everyone; it may be advantageous to place some people in job search or work experience, rather than try to "crunch people into an educational format all the time." Furthermore, VABE is viewed as a component that is suitable only for those with a high level of motivation, solid basic skills, regular attendance, and an interest in office skills occupations.

If a student is judged not to be making good progress, she is usually asked to confer with her instructor and then to attend a formal conference with her ESW. In some instances, such a student may be referred for a diagnostic assessment of "learning differences" (i.e., learning disabilities); if she is judged to be learning different, she may be referred to the Alternative Learning Services lab at Mid-City. In other cases where a GAIN enrollee's continued participation in education classes is judged to be of limited value, the student will be referred back to GAIN for reassignment to other components.

Limits on length of stay. In contrast to the lack of time limits in ABE and GED, there is a six-month time limit on length of stay in VABE (there will also be a limit on stay in VGED), in the office skills program at South Bay, and in ESL. The last of these has generated the most controversy. It was instituted by the County DSS about a year ago because of the perception that, once enrolled in ESL, students never exited that component and were thus absorbing resources that should rightfully be spread among more people. DSS officials also claimed that they were responding to concerns raised by the

educators themselves that ESL classes were a comfortable "home" for foreign students-much more comfortable than looking for a job-and that students were deliberately doing poorly on the progress tests to avoid moving on to subsequent GAIN activities.

In general, the educational personnel-both ESL instructors and administrators-with whom the researcher spoke expressed ambivalent attitudes toward the time limit. The most common view was that the DSS policy was insensitive to the wide variation existing within the ESL population, which includes some people who are highly literate in their primary language and some who are nonliterate in their native tongue. (As one ESL teacher commented, information students provide early on about the number of years of education in their native language they have had is often inaccurate, since students are frequently embarrassed to state that they had only one or two-or no-years of schooling and may pad that figure. Only over time does the truth emerge.) The respondents felt that while the six-month limit may be reasonable for those who enter with some ability to speak English already, it may be unrealistic for those entering at lower levels, who are unlikely to learn enough within this time period to become employable in an English-speaking environment. (One ESL instructor voiced the view that most would be able to get only minimum-wage jobs in such areas as food service, power sewing, and light industry, which already employ many people who speak their language, so that on the worksite they would interact mostly in their native tongue.) While DSS is willing to grant extensions of the length of ESL stay on an exceptions basis, one ESL instructor explained that this usually happened only when she could make a special case that within a specified few months, the student would be able to achieve a high enough test score to exit formally from the component-an unusual circumstance, given the students' skills at entry.

V. Innovation in Classes and Curricula

The spirit of entrepreneurship that characterized the establishment of the GAIN learning centers continues to be evident in the development of new classes and in outreach to students who were previously left unserved (or who were inadequately served). Three examples of such innovation are discussed below: the Vocational ABE class (VABE) at Mid-City; the concurrent vocational and academic training at South Bay; and the Alternative Learning Services Lab, again at Mid-City. (The Vocational GED class that Mid-City plans to pilot this year is another instance of educational innovation but is not discussed here because it is still in a formative stage.)

A. Vocational ABE

Now in its fourth year, VABE is, as its name suggests, an effort to inject a vocational thrust into

adult basic education by fusing instruction in academic and vocational skills with job placement.[24] VABE was originally conceived by the associate dean at Mid-City, largely in response to signals that DSS wanted education to be more "employment-focused"–a catch-phrase that was left up to the individual education providers to operationalize. VABE's concentration on office skills reflects both the opportunity to draw on the classes in those subjects already offered by the Mid-City Center and the conviction of the component's designers that entry-level office skills are needed in all occupations (ranging from tourism and hospitality–a major source of employment in San Diego–to banking and medical applications).

Unlike the other classes, whose contracts specify the achievement of educational outcomes, the VABE class (along with the concurrent vocational and academic program at South Bay) is evaluated on the basis of success in job placements–a fact that has made it more attractive to the San Diego Consortium, which funds the class. (Although the PIC also funds the ABE, GED, and ESL classes, PIC officials describe these as a "harder sell" in an organization that is focused on placements as the bottom line.) By incorporating a job placement function, VABE also sought to avoid the frustration Mid-City educators experienced when their promising students were referred back to DSS for placement–and staff members never learned what happened to them.

VABE has the capacity to serve 32 students at any given time and is staffed by a teacher, a teacher's aide, and a job developer. New students spend their first three weeks in the VABE classroom working on academic and basic keyboarding skills. Teachers monitor and assist students while they work individually on computers and engage the students in whole-class and small-group exercises and discussions. The academic curriculum adapts and augments the standard topics covered in ABE classes and has a practical, "real world" emphasis. Thus, for example, language instruction centers on Business English; many of the exercises involve the kind of writing (letters, memos, etc.) office assistants might be expected to do. (For example, in one class that was observed, students rewrote sentences to avoid starting with "It is," "there are," and similar phrases.) Math skills are taught from a consumer math perspective.

Classes use an extensive array of curriculum materials. As noted above, software packages include those developed by WASATCH Education Systems and covering life skills, word processing,

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[24]VABE accepts ESL students who show a high level of proficiency in English. Accordingly, the class is sometimes referred to as VABE/VESL.

basic typing, writing, and math; Paradigm (covering basic typing); and Skills Bank (including fine points of grammar). Workbooks in use include the Cambridge and Contemporary GED Series, SRA Reading, Math Skills that Work (Contemporary Books); and Writing for Workplace Success (Paradigm). Instructors are constantly on the lookout for new materials they can use; for example, a four-page spread in the Los Angeles *Times* on resume do's and don't's was incorporated into classes on how to look for jobs.

Because a new group of students enters each month, strong bonds develop among its members; the teachers try to reinforce cooperation and teamwork, seeing these as important elements of success in the workplace. In informal conversations with the researcher, the VABE students themselves commented on how much they help each other in class, contrasting this with the lack of peer support they experienced in high school.

After the first three weeks, students continue to use the VABE classroom as a "home base," but gradually spend more and more of their time (up to 20 hours a week) in office systems classes offered by Mid-City, in which VABE students are mixed with students who are not in GAIN. Students are allowed to remain in VABE for 24 weeks[25]; the instructor likes the rigidity of the limit, noting that it forces students to keep on task and to work to capacity. During this time, they are theoretically able to earn up to 15 different office skills certificates in such subjects as typing, filing and records management, 10-key machine operation, word processing, spreadsheet programs, DOS, telephone techniques, and machine transcription. Students must earn three certificates, and on average, they earn five or six certificates while they are in the component. These certificates are intended to signify at least a basic level of familiarity with computers, other business machines, business software (e.g., WordPerfect and spreadsheets) and office procedures, so that VABE graduates will be prepared for entry-level office skills jobs.[26]

During their last weeks in VABE, students receive job placement assistance from VABE's job developer. Interestingly, while VABE's placement thrust has the philosophical and financial support of the PIC, it has not won a ringing endorsement from DSS. The county GAIN director says that he has "mixed feelings" about VABE job placement, allowing that while education providers may undertake

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[25]In fact, students' performance is assessed after 16 weeks in the component, and if a student is judged to lack motivation or to perform poorly, she may be terminated from VABE at that point.

[26]Because Mid-City does not award college credit for any of its courses, however, the certificates cannot count toward an A.A. degree.

this responsibility, they should not spend more than two or three weeks on it. His reservations appear to be rooted in a "turf" dispute, since conducting job clubs, monitoring individual job search activities, and providing job placement assistance are integral functions of DSS/GAIN. Thus, the GAIN director expresses concern that the philosophy and approach to job search taken by the educators may differ from those adopted by GAIN staff, with clients being confused as a result (although he also acknowledges that he does not know whether this is the case). For his part, the dean at Mid-City believes that the VABE model may pose a threat to DSS' wish to focus exclusively on job search, by proving that education is successful when integrated with job training and with strong placement efforts.

VABE students submit a weekly record of what they have accomplished to the instructor. Over the last summer, the instructor also asked students to write a report each day about their achievement of "work maturity competencies" (maintaining regular attendance, demonstrating positive attitudes, exhibiting good interpersonal relations, and completing tasks effectively). She felt that this form, which required the teacher's signature, was especially useful because it obligated students to interact with "authority" (the teacher)-something they are often uncomfortable with-and afforded them an opportunity to reflect on their actions.

In developing the component, the VABE instructor has had to work closely with Mid-City's office skills teaching staff. Initially, VABE students were not particularly welcome in these classes; instructors complained that the VABE enrollees were not used to working independently (perhaps in part because the VABE instructor emphasized cooperative learning) and that they didn't know how to follow instructions. Over time, however, this has changed, and the office skills instructors now report that VABE students are a model for the others-consistently on task, and spurring the non-GAIN students to achieve more. In part, this attitude change is due to the readiness of the VABE instructor to adapt her curriculum to prepare students more adequately for the vocational classes (e.g., by teaching basic keyboarding skills in the VABE class itself). In fact, it reflects the advocacy efforts of the VABE teacher, who personally introduces the students to the vocational instructors, stresses their positive attributes, and checks on their progress.

In part, too, the teachers' change in attitude may result from the fact that VABE students are highly screened for both motivation and basic skills before they are admitted to the component. While some students are referred directly to VABE from GAIN, others are referred to VABE by their ABE, GED, and ESL instructors at Mid-City if they display academic proficiency, good attendance, an interest

in office skills occupations, and a commitment to work. Interestingly, of seven VABE students with whom the researcher talked about their backgrounds and goals, six had previously worked, one for only a summer but several for extensive periods (one for 7 years, two for 10 years, although for one of the latter, employment was not continuous). Several VABE students already held a high school diploma or GED when they entered the program.

A review of statistical data maintained by the VABE program on VABE enrollees in Fiscal Year 1994 suggests impressive results. Of 99 students, 54 completed the program and 31 remained enrolled at year's end. (Of the remaining 14, ten were deferred for reasons of illness or family crisis but may subsequently return; four were dropped.) Thirty-four students had become employed with a variety of employers, including the U.S. Postal Service, a medical instrument company, a business machine company, two hotels, a health care provider, a nursery, a mortuary, and the Community College District. The average wage reported was $6.25 an hour. Twelve other students went on to other training, including either work experience or further skills training.[27]

Because of "creaming," it is difficult to determine to what degree the component's success is attributable to the characteristics of its students when they first enroll, as opposed to the skills they learn in class. VABE instructors firmly believe that their continuing efforts to engage students, to prod them, and to encourage them to believe in their own potential are critical. They point out that VABE students experience many problems, including erratic attendance, and need attention of a kind that is both ongoing and firm.

They also believe that VABE is inappropriate for lower-functioning ABE students. As one instructor (the summer VABE teacher, who teaches the regular ABE class during the school year) put it, "We'd all like to see it [ABE instruction] connected to work, but I don't know how to do that. I don't know."

B. Concurrent Education and Skills Training

Concurrent provision of basic and vocational education, underway for a year and a half at this writing, represents the South Bay GAIN Lab's response to DSS' interest in more employment-focused

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[27]These data relate to initial placements only; if a student subsequently lost her job or found another one, these events were not recorded.

Information on students' entries into employment are maintained by GAIN as well as by the VABE program. However, education staff complain that they do not get this information from GAIN in a timely manner, if at all.

education. Unlike VABE, it does not entail a change in the basic education curriculum. Rather, students in the concurrent program combine regular academic instruction in ABE or GED preparation (or, occasionally, ESL classes) with classes in office skills. At the outset, they take two GED periods and two "voc" periods a day; after they have passed two of the GED tests, they then spend one period in GED and the remaining three in voc classes.

As in VABE, the instructor has discretion over who may be enrolled in the class; referrals come both from GAIN and from the other South Bay teachers. She accepts only those who say they want to work and who are interested in office skills occupations. Students can be dropped from the voc component if they are frequently absent or if they persist in speaking Spanish during the class (a practice frowned upon at this site, which is only a few miles from the Mexican border and the majority of whose enrollees are Hispanic).

Thirty students are now enrolled in the concurrent component, and two-thirds of the site's new students are assigned to concurrent training, rather than to the traditional education-only classes. The class comprises multiple components that cover such topics as typing, filing, use of fax and ten-key machines, proofreading, word processing, Lotus 1-2-3 and d-Base, interview skills, and telephone skills. Each component involves curriculum materials that the instructor put together by writing to various publishers. Students also undertake job simulations developed by Southwestern Publishing Company that require them, for example, to type inventory lists or write memos; they complete a filing curriculum developed by Gregg (Gregg Quick Filing Practice). The teacher reports that she constantly changes the curriculum in response to what employers want; recently, for example, she had students switch from WordPerfect to WordPerfect for Windows. Much of the work involves tasks done at the computer; the main classroom is equipped with seven Macintoshes, used for desktop publishing, word processing, spreadsheets, and data base, and 5 IBMs, used for all of the above except desktop publishing.

Students are enrolled in the class for 6 months; during this time, they may earn up to 22 certificates (and typically do earn 12-13 of them). Enrollees are required to earn certain certificates (e.g., a basic certificate in 10-key machines), and then have the option of earning more advanced certificates in the field (e.g., payroll, accounting) if they want to pursue 10-key work.

The fourth period of each day is devoted to changing topics that include: telephone techniques, teamwork, business English, interviewing, putting together a "career portfolio" that contains an application and a resume, handling various on-the-job situations (this through an innovative interactive

video), and dress and make-up for working. (The instructor describes the last of these as the students' most formidable barrier to getting a job; many simply lack appropriate clothes for working. The program makes available a "clothes closet" of used or donated items from which students can borrow interviewing outfits; they may also take an outfit but must sign an agreement to replace it once they have become employed.)

The instructor places a premium on cooperation and self-help among the students. To this end, she reports that she tells her class to behave as if she were the Chief Executive Officer of the organization and reminds them that employees don't knock on the CEO's door with endless questions. Instead, they try to learn from their fellow employees; and in her class, students are strongly urged to help one another. Every period has a "class aide," a student who has seniority in the class and can assist others, and students can approach the aide; the instructor herself is the point of last resort. The longer students remain in the class, the more responsibility they take, e.g., for ensuring that supplies are available.

After they have been in the vocational component for five months, students embark on a job search phase. They are assisted in this effort by the vocational instructor and by a full-time job developer, who divides her time between South Bay and the other GAIN lab operated by the Sweetwater Union High School District.

Data maintained by the learning center indicate that 30 participants in the concurrent program had found jobs as of August 4, 1994, at an average wage of $5.80 an hour. Ten students were employed as receptionists; several students also found jobs as customer service representatives and as clerks. The office skills instructor, a friend of hers, and the site's job developer were reported to be responsible for two-thirds of the placements; in the remaining cases, students found the jobs on their own, or, in a couple of instances, with the assistance of a DSS-run job club.

C. Alternative Learning Services Program and Laboratory

In adult education programs throughout the county, students with learning disabilities have typically been mainstreamed with other students, receiving few if any special services geared toward their needs. The Alternative Learning Service (ALS) program and the ALS lab, located at the Mid-City Center, represent an effort to respond to the special needs of learning-different students. Begun in 1989, ALS has both diagnostic and remediation objectives. Specifically, it seeks to assist GAIN education instructors with the identification, remediation, and placement of learning-different GAIN participants,

as well as to help students experiencing difficulty in acquiring basic skills.

Referrals for assessment and for admission to the ALS lab come from GAIN education instructors all over San Diego County (although, in fact, few students attending the lab come from the northern part of the county because of the distance involved). Students are referred by their ABE, GED, and ESL instructors when they have an unexplained history of academic trouble. A Ph.D. psychometrician who is a part-time consultant to SDCCD (working 10 hours a week during the winter and 30 hours during the summer) conducts a full psychoeducational evaluation of each referral. An individual is judged to be learning different if there is a gap of 1.5 standard deviation between her academic performance and her score on a measure of global ability; specific "processing deficits" (e.g., memory deficits, directionality problems, and auditory sequencing difficulties) are also assessed. These assessments are important because if someone is certified as learning different, she can receive special materials and can take the GED test under different conditions (e.g., she can be given a longer period in which to take the test).

The ALS lab at Mid-City is operated by a resource specialist who holds a master's degree in education and who is assisted by a teacher's aide. The resource specialist also provides information and suggests instructional strategies to teachers of learning different students at the other GAIN learning centers; he estimates that he receives 10-15 calls a month from teachers in other classrooms who solicit his assistance. Previously, there were two other resource specialists who visited the county's GAIN learning centers and performed both testing and technical assistance functions; however, their positions were eliminated for budgetary reasons.

The Alternative Learning Service has seen or assisted over 750 clients during the five-year period it has been in existence. During the same period, the ALS lab has enrolled 272 clients. The lab has the capacity to serve 30 students at any given time; while it is funded only for GAIN students, a few students who are not GAIN enrollees may fill in vacant slots. The instructor, while cognizant of the need to maintain a certain enrollment level for ADA purposes, feels that if all slots were occupied (which would mean about 25 people attending on any given day), there would be too many people for him to work one-on-one with students. Lessons tailored to people with specific processing deficits, individual instruction, computer-assisted instruction, small-group instruction, computer-assisted instruction, and cooperative learning are all used to help participants, who include both ABE and GED students, reach their goals.

The lab contains up-to-date educational technology and materials. Computer bulletin boards and

a CD ROM unit that includes auditory as well as visual stimuli allow students to learn in multiple ways as well as to become more familiar with computers and with the world of technology in general. The instructor also brings in magazines and books to spark students' interest.

The instructor holds high expectations for students. He explains that he doesn't dwell on their problems; instead, he tells them, "You can do it. I expect you to do it." In his view, a critical element of his work is building students' self-esteem and self-confidence. Poor attenders are not allowed to remain in the class, because they present bad role models for other students. Conversely, good attenders are rewarded with certificates. Absenteeism among ALS students is followed up in the same way as for other students; according to the associate dean at Mid-City, the attendance patterns of ALS students are similar to those of other GAIN enrollees in ABE classes.

As in other GAIN classrooms, the academic performance of students is periodically tested. In addition, students are evaluated monthly in terms of attendance, progress, on-task performance, and commitment-qualities on which job supervisors will also evaluate them, as the ALS instructor notes.

The ALS instructor says that the emphasis of the class is primarily on basic skills, but job-related skills are also covered; he works with students on job readiness skills, applications, and resume preparation. The lab seeks to prepare participants either for employment or for additional training. Those students who are experiencing particular difficulties in learning and who are making little progress are sometimes referred to the Workability Program, operated by SDCCD, which offers on-the-job training as well as employment coaches to help students with issues related to work. (However, this program is not limited to GAIN students, and there is a waiting list for it.)

VI. The Changing Role of GAIN Education in San Diego

The role of education in the San Diego GAIN program has changed dramatically in recent years. Until about three years ago, in accordance with the GAIN legislation, virtually all GAIN registrants determined to be in need of basic education were initially assigned to this component, unless they specifically requested to be placed in job search instead. And perhaps in part because English is not the primary language spoken in a substantial proportion of AFDC households in San Diego County, large numbers of GAIN clients were found to be in need of basic education. The San Diego County GAIN program director estimated that during GAIN's early years, 65 to 70 percent of GAIN registrants went into education as a first activity.

Because education was so crucial to the operation of GAIN, its providers were in a strong negotiating position vis-a-vis the welfare department. The school districts that formed the GRAD Consortium were able--in part by presenting a united front--to reach an agreement with DSS that permitted the development of an innovative, resource-intensive system of education for welfare recipients.

This situation has changed markedly because of pressures exerted by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, which exercises authority over the County Department of Social Services. The Board was dissatisfied by what it perceived as GAIN's slow progress in placing people in employment--especially in contrast with San Diego's experience in operating two welfare-to-work programs in the early 1980s that had emphasized job search as an up-front activity and had achieved strong employment impacts at a lower cost than GAIN (see Goldman, Friedlander, and Long, 1986; Hamilton and Friedlander, 1989). Moreover, the Board was concerned about the skyrocketing AFDC caseload in San Diego County, which increased from some 47,000 cases in 1989 to 67,000 in 1994. That increase has been fueled in part by contractions in federal expenditures for the military (a bastion of the local economy); more sensationally, media reports suggested that the increase was due to the ease with which illegal immigrants could enter the country (the Mexican border is only half an hour by car from downtown San Diego), obtain false documents, and get on welfare. The Board of Supervisors believed that a GAIN program with a greater focus on employment rather than education would be more successful in "smoking out" illegal aliens and curbing fraud. Finally, the Board was also influenced by the early results of an MDRC evaluation of GAIN in six counties (Riccio and Friedlander, 1992), which indicated that the county with the highest impacts on entry into employment and the greatest AFDC savings (Riverside) was one in which administrators placed considerable emphasis on taking any job (even a low-paying one) and appeared to downplay the importance of education.

San Diego County DSS responded to this political pressure by joining with three other counties in petitioning the state legislature to be part of a special demonstration program. The demonstration allowed the county to modify the GAIN design so that, after the initial assessment, registrants could be placed in any activity that was appropriate and available.

The result has been a major increase in initial assignment to a mandatory structured job search component, which involves three weeks of group "job club" followed by two weeks of individual job-hunting. This shift has become even more pronounced since early 1994, when DSS introduced the "It

Pays to Work" campaign, which emphasizes the economic benefits of accepting a low-paying job with ongoing welfare supplementation of earnings. The GAIN program director estimates that 70 percent or even more GAIN registrants now participate in job search as their first activity–just the reverse of the situation that existed three years ago, when some 30 percent did so.

The reduced prominence of education in the San Diego County GAIN program has meant a shift in the balance of power among the major players and has had a number of implications for the adult education providers. First, it has affected the flow of students into some education programs: at the South Bay lab, for example, the number of students referred to the lab by GAIN dropped from 319 in the first six months of 1993 to 179 in the corresponding period in 1994. The lab, which can accommodate 123 students, in early August had an enrollment of less than 100.[28]

Second, and concomitantly, it has affected some education providers' budgets: serving fewer students ultimately means lower ADA, the major funding source of teachers' salaries. A principal point of contention at present is whether the learning centers will receive enough referrals to draw down the full amount of ADA necessary to support the instructional staff. Otherwise, the education providers will face an unappealing choice: incur a financial loss by continuing to support GAIN education services at the current level, or reduce that level–and possibly service quality as well. The drop in funding has forced the Sweetwater Union High School District to let go or reassign GAIN instructional staff. The Assistant Superintendent for the district notes that he is currently "fighting vigorously" to keep referrals up; as a founder of the GRAD consortium, he explains, he has "put a lot into GAIN" and doesn't want to run a "half-way" program.

Third, educators maintain that the decision to place GAIN registrants initially in job search has resulted in a drop in the quality of the students entering the education components, since those who find jobs early on are presumably the most motivated and skilled individuals within the group judged in need of education.

Finally, and somewhat paradoxically, while the education providers are engaged in a holding action to preserve what they have achieved, the change in their role and status within GAIN may also be contributing to an even higher degree of innovation. This is evident in their continued development

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[28]A drop in DSS referrals did not emerge as a prominent theme during the visit to the Mid-City Continuing Education Center. The administrator at that site describes the reduction in referrals as a temporary one and notes that since that time, referrals have returned to their previous level.

of new vocationally-focused components of appeal to the PIC (e.g., VGED). Innovation is also apparent in the efforts of some providers to engage previously unserved groups of students. The South Bay lab, for example, plans to conduct outreach and offer night classes to people who receive supplemental welfare grants while working at low-paying jobs and who may wish to upgrade their skills. Both South Bay and Mid-City are also seeking authorization to recruit into their GAIN vocational classes non-AFDC recipients who are economically disadvantaged by JTPA standards, in order to boost overall enrollments and, not incidentally, increase ADA.

While the relationship between the education administrators and the upper levels of DSS administration cannot be termed "antagonistic," it certainly appears to be more conflictual than it was in the past. At the same time, however, the mutually supportive relationships existing between instructors and ESWs mean that at the level of the individual school, interagency relationships are smooth and cooperative.

In a larger sense, the parties are divided about who should receive education services and what the larger purpose of education in a welfare-to-work program should be. DSS' current position is that such services are appropriate, but for a residual group of welfare recipients who are incapable of holding any job at all without this aid. The education administrators, while accepting DSS' emphasis on employment as the criterion of GAIN success, believe that clients equipped with better basic and vocational skills will be better able to find jobs in the first place, and will be better able to keep the jobs they find. As the last chapter discusses, the role of education in moving welfare recipients toward self-sufficiency is likely to be a critical concern in many jurisdictions as states go about redefining their welfare-to-work initiatives in light of the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

CHAPTER 3

THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE BEGIN WORK/STUDY PROGRAM

I. Introduction

The Brooklyn College Work/Study Program is one of 12 BEGIN education programs specifically designed for AFDC recipients in New York City who meet the requirements for mandatory participation in JOBS and have limited English-language skills or lack a high school diploma or GED[1]. (BEGIN–Begin Employment, Gain Independence Now–is the name of the City's JOBS Program.[2]) Although the Brooklyn College program differs from VABE classes and from the concurrent education and skills program discussed in the last chapter along many dimensions–e.g., the nature and skills levels of the population served, the programs' duration and curricula–the Brooklyn and San Diego County programs share a common emphasis on employment as a near-term goal of welfare education.

The BEGIN education programs are notable for their emphasis on work readiness; the Brooklyn College program is of particular interest because staff have organized the curriculum in the site's 14 work/study classes around specific occupational areas, or "clusters." Thus, ABE students develop reading and writing skills in the context of learning about an occupational area of their choice, selecting from clusters in the areas of health care, child care, and clerical work, or opting for a fourth "exploratory/nontraditional" cluster that covers a variety of occupations, including those that are nontraditional for women.[3] The program is still in the process of evolution and change, as staff work to identify and resolve new problems as they arise.

The 12 BEGIN education programs are of three types; each type of program is provided at four locations (and some locations offer more than one type of program):

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[1]A second BEGIN program operated by Brooklyn College, the Child Care Provider Program, is of interest because it serves in a single classroom students whose academic skill levels are extremely varied. How it does this is discussed briefly at the end of this chapter.

The BEGIN education programs occasionally admit high school graduates or holders of a GED with low basic skills on an exceptions basis. General policy, however, is to exclude them from these programs.

[2]The New York State JOBS program is known simply as "JOBS." The specific state and local welfare policies and provisions described in this chapter, which were in place when the case study was carried out, are likely to change with the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

[3]Although the intention is for students to have their choice of cluster area, the full range of choices is not always available, as discussed below.

- **BEGIN Language Programs**. These include courses in English as a Second Language (ESL), basic education in the student's native language (BENL), and Spanish-language GED preparation. In general, students can remain enrolled in the programs for up to 28 weeks, depending on their level of English proficiency at entry: those with little or no English enroll in a 12-week Immersion Phase, consisting of classroom instruction only. Graduates of the Immersion Phase, along with entering students with some knowledge of English, take part in a 16-week Continuation Phase, with alternating weeks of classroom instruction and work experience.

- **BEGIN Work/Study Programs**. These 20-week-long programs provide 10 weeks of work experience and 10 weeks of Adult Basic Education for native speakers of English whose initial scores on the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)[4] indicate that they read below the eighth- or ninth-grade level.[5]

- **BEGIN GED Programs**. These 13-week-long programs are intended to serve students whose TABE reading scores are at the ninth-grade level or above, but in some cases will enroll students with eighth-grade reading scores if they score well on a GED predictor test.

The BEGIN education programs are directly managed by the Office of Employment Services (OES) in the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA). HRA is the umbrella agency responsible for the administration of public assistance grants, Medicaid, food stamps, preventive and protective services for children, protective services for adults, home care, child support collections, publicly-funded child care, and JOBS; OES is charged with the operation of the BEGIN program.

The BEGIN program, as much as or perhaps more than other JOBS programs across the country,

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[4]The TABE is widely used in adult education programs to measure achievement. The complete version of the instrument has seven sections: vocabulary; reading comprehension (questions on word meaning, main ideas, conclusions, inferences, etc.); language mechanics (capitalization and punctuation); language expression (usage, sentence structure, and paragraph development); spelling; mathematical calculations; and mathematical concepts and applications. All questions are multiple-choice, and each section is timed; the total time for all seven sections is about 3 hours and 20 minutes. There are four different levels of the test: Easy (E), Moderate (M), Difficult (D), and Advanced (A). These correspond in difficulty to grades 2-4, 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12. A brief screening test is used to determine which test level should be administered to a test-taker.

[5]The minimum level of literacy required by the work/study programs varies from program to program, with the Manhattan, Bronx, and Queens programs accepting beginning readers, while the Brooklyn program does not. It has also varied within the same program over time. Thus, because of financial constraints, the Brooklyn work/study program reduced the number of ABE instructors from nine to seven and could no longer serve very low-level readers; the program, which had previously enrolled students reading at the second grade level, thereafter required a 4th-grade reading level at entry. Students who read below the minimum level for a BEGIN work/study program, or who cannot be accommodated in lower-level BEGIN classes because of slot limitations, are referred to lower-level ABE programs that are not managed by BEGIN, although such programs generally have long waiting lists.

faces formidable challenges in helping recipients move toward self-sufficiency. The first challenge is the sheer magnitude of the caseload. Predictably, given its status as the nation's largest city, New York City is also home to more welfare recipients than any other city: in January 1995, there were some 316,648 AFDC cases containing approximately 155,150 adults considered employable (i.e., who met the criteria for JOBS-mandatory status). Furthermore, the characteristics of the New York City welfare population suggest substantial barriers to employment. Data collected by the New York State Department of Social Services in 1987 indicate that only 38 percent of the household heads in families on welfare in New York City had ever worked 12 months or longer; only 41 percent held a high school diploma or GED, and 21 percent had completed less than nine years of schooling. (By contrast, as noted in Chapter 1, 54 percent of welfare mothers nationwide in 1991 held a high school diploma or GED.)

Data collected by the BEGIN education programs confirm the picture of marked educational deficits indicated by the New York State statistics. Of 4,678 individuals participating in OES-managed education programs as of February 22, 1995, or pending such participation, almost half (46 percent) were enrolled in or scheduled for BEGIN Language Programs. Among students enrolled in the first phase of the language programs, 69 percent were judged to be functioning below the third-grade level in English. In addition, of the 2,069 students participating in BEGIN English-language ABE and GED classes on that date, 28 percent read below the fifth-grade level, 33 percent between the 5.0 and 6.9 grade levels, and 10 percent between the 7.0 and 8.9 grade levels. Only 30 percent read at the ninth-grade level or higher.

BEGIN includes a variety of activities, some directly managed by OES and others managed outside of HRA. Welfare recipients, while mandated to attend some activity continuously until they secure employment, have a strong voice in determining which activity they will pursue and are permitted to remain in education or training for up to two years. The OES-managed components include, in addition to the education programs (also referred to here as "BEGIN education programs"): job club (i.e., systematic group job search), Spanish-language job club, career planning (a four-week-long group activity devoted to career counseling), and internships (13-week-long work experience programs for clients with a high school diploma or GED). Non-OES-managed activities include two-year colleges, no-cost training programs, job placement programs, and ABE and GED preparation programs. The non-OES education programs serve both non-welfare and welfare populations and often have lengthy waiting

lists.[6]

Together, the work/study, GED, and language programs accounted for a relatively small share -11 percent-of the 55,639 AFDC recipients enrolled in all BEGIN activities between July and December 1994. (By contrast, 27 percent of the BEGIN enrollees were attending two-year colleges, 27 percent were in vocational training programs, 23 percent were in non-OES-managed education programs, and 12 percent were in other OES- and non-OES-managed programs.[7]) However, the BEGIN education programs accounted for 52 percent of the AFDC recipients enrolled in the OES-managed BEGIN components during the same time period.

The BEGIN education programs were created by HRA in response to a particular vision and to fulfill certain needs. To use the term of one of the programs' principal designers, they were conceived of as "vestibule programs"-programs that BEGIN enrollees could enter immediately, without languishing on a waiting list and from which they would exit better prepared to enter employment or other BEGIN activities. They were intended to offer students a good educational experience that would "allow them to get in touch with their potential as learners and workers," make them excited about the prospect of lifelong learning, and allow them to engage with their peers. In the programs, too, students would have the opportunity to acquire the personal habits (e.g., regular attendance) that would enable them to be better prepared for further education, training, or employment.

The creators of the BEGIN education programs do not appear to have had specific *educational* goals in mind, in the sense of boosting educational attainment or achievement; over time, as discussed below, their educational mission has come to be defined as that of preparing welfare recipients for

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[6]Recipients participating in the non-OES education programs are mostly "self-initiated" (i.e., people who have found the programs on their own, rather than upon referral from OES staff). Like all BEGIN enrollees, they are entitled to transportation and child care expenses.

The non-OES education programs are typically operated by community agencies; they differ from the BEGIN education programs in that they are not oriented toward employment, they do not as a rule impose time limits (other than the overall time limit on participation in education and training), and participation in such programs is often for less than 20 hours a week. (The JOBS participation standards count monthly participation in activities averaging 20 hours or more per week among all clients who are eligible for JOBS services that month.)

OES is seeking to implement a new policy that would require all participants in education and training to engage in these activities for a minimum of 20 hours a week.

[7]Because such a large part of the caseload is in self-initiated activities-two-year colleges and non-OES education, as well as some training-BEGIN may be thought of as a program that largely, although certainly not exclusively, serves clients who have "volunteered" for these activities, even though they meet the criteria for mandatory participation under JOBS.

employment, or for ensuing activities that will lead to employment. The current program design, some of whose elements have been in place since the programs' inception in 1989, reflects this sense of purpose in a number of ways:

- **Conjoined education and work experience.** A key feature of both the language programs and the work/study programs is that students alternate one week of academic skills instruction with a week of work experience at worksites in municipal and nonprofit agencies.[8] (The GED programs, in contrast, are intended to offer intensive preparation for the GED exam and do not have a work experience component.)

- **Contextualized curriculum**. All BEGIN education programs relate the curriculum to the world of work; this is particularly true of the work/study and language programs.

- **Time limits**. In part because of the view that the BEGIN education programs should be the first step on the road to employment, in part because of limited slot availability and the incessant press of new cases swelling the ranks of the JOBS-mandatory, time limits have been imposed on program participation. As noted above, students in the work/study programs can stay in these programs for up to 20 weeks; GED students can remain enrolled for up to 13 weeks (with a possible four-week extension); and ESL students can attend for up to 28 weeks. If it is judged appropriate, students may recycle through the work/study classes, but only after they have been referred to a next-step activity.

- **Emphasis on short-term basic education, not GED attainment**. Work/study enrollees are told from the outset that they are unlikely to obtain a GED through the program. Moreover, work/study "graduates" are not encouraged to pursue a GED at a BEGIN education program unless their test scores suggest that they are likely to obtain this credential within the allowed time period. (They are, however, encouraged to continue their education on their own, especially in combination with employment.)

- **Numerical goals for job placements and movement into "next step" activities**. BEGIN education programs must place 10 percent of their students in employment.[9] OES staff members known as Client Service Representatives (CSRs), who are outstationed at the education programs, are responsible for placing another 50 percent

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[8]The worksite component, although an intrinsic part of the work/study programs, is discussed in this report primarily as it relates to classroom instruction.

[9]However, entry into employment need not directly follow classroom participation. As discussed below, program staff count toward the 10 percent goal jobs obtained by those who leave the program and subsequently find employment, either on their own or with the assistance of another program.

Initially, the BEGIN program design did not set employment goals. However, by the time the program had been in existence two or three years (depending on the specific site), a target of 5 percent of students placed in employment was established. This was increased to 10 percent in 1994, when the New York State Education Department, a major funder of the BEGIN education programs, established a 10 percent goal for all welfare education programs receiving Education Department funding.

of the students into appropriate "next step" activities (e.g., vocational skills training programs, further education, job clubs). However, a program's level of financing is not affected by whether or not it meets its goals. Interestingly, programs do not have explicit numerical targets related to educational objectives (e.g., grade-level increases, GED attainment), although entry into training programs and other "next step" activities is often contingent on reading at the eighth-grade level, as measured by the TABE.

- **Emphasis on next steps rather than program completion**. Students are encouraged to leave the work/study classes if employment, training, or other opportunities present themselves, rather than to remain enrolled for the full period permissible.

- **Job developers on staff**. All BEGIN education programs except one employ at least one job developer, who is responsible for helping students locate jobs.

This paper examines the implementation of these features in the Brooklyn setting. The paper is based on a number of sources. Two researchers spent a total of eight person-days at the Brooklyn site, during which they interviewed the project director, administered a survey to all nine members of the teaching staff and talked with them informally, observed classes, and spoke with students. In addition, they conducted interviews with other respondents, who included the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of HRA, who heads OES, the Assistant Director of BEGIN Operations, the current and former BEGIN Directors of Education, the Assistant Dean for Adult and Continuing Education at Brooklyn College (under whose division the Brooklyn College BEGIN Program operates), and the OES liaison to the three BEGIN education programs operated by the City University of New York (CUNY). The paper is divided into six sections. After this introductory section, the next section considers the origins and development of the BEGIN education programs and the move to curricula centered on occupational clusters at the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program. Section III examines several key features of the Brooklyn program: the setting, structure and schedule, students, and staffing pattern. Section IV describes the program in operation, discussing the Orientation and Assessment (O & A) period, classroom activities, procedures for monitoring attendance and performance, and the transition to next-step activities. Section V discusses students' views of the program. The final section considers some of the larger issues involved in the design of the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program in particular and the BEGIN work/study programs in general.

II. The Origins and Development of BEGIN Education: An Overview

A. Early Development and Funding

The BEGIN education programs were phased in over a three-year period. The first ones started in 1989 in Manhattan and were joined the next year by programs in the Bronx. The programs in Brooklyn were operational by June 1991 and the programs in Queens by June 1992. [10] Precursors of these programs, however, antedate JOBS and set the stage for the BEGIN education programs in their inclusion of both classroom and worksite components. Interestingly, these programs were developed as much in response to the needs of recipients of Home Relief (HR), New York's State's program of general assistance for needy individuals and families who do not meet the criteria for federally-assisted welfare programs like AFDC, as to those of AFDC mothers. According to state law, employable HR recipients could be required to participate in the Public Works Program, which assigned them to "workfare" (work for benefits) positions in public agencies, and during the mid-1980s, the state operated small unpaid work experience programs for AFDC recipients as well. The then-Deputy Commissioner of HRA, who had oversight responsibility for welfare employment services, believed that the workfare sponsor agencies often did little to ensure that workfare positions would build work readiness or vocational skills; there were also reports from the worksites that workfare employees were having trouble with relatively simple tasks such as filing and taking telephone messages. In 1988, she and the Director of BEGIN Operations developed a small pilot program whereby the City University of New York (CUNY) agreed to deliver literacy instruction to HR and AFDC recipients in workfare positions, while the agencies that employed them agreed to allow some work hours to be spent in the classroom. A second precursor to the BEGIN education programs, the Enhanced Work Experience Program (EWEP), operated during the first half of 1989 and was directed only toward mandatory AFDC recipients.

In creating the BEGIN education classes, HRA was responsive to the traditional members of the city's literacy community. These included the Community Development Agency (the umbrella agency for the city's community-based organizations), CUNY, the Board of Education, and the public libraries; all had traditionally received city literacy monies, and all wanted to be involved in BEGIN as well. It was understood from the outset that the library literacy programs were inappropriate delivery agents for

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[10]Staten Island's relatively small AFDC caseload is currently served by one BEGIN worker, and BEGIN enrollees in that borough are primarily self-initiated.

BEGIN because they were limited in scale-relying principally on one-to-one tutoring by volunteers-and they could not engage students in classes for 20 hours a week to aid compliance with the JOBS regulations. As the BEGIN education programs were developed, they were allocated among the three remaining literacy providers. In this allocation, work/study and GED programs were usually considered together and given to the same program sponsor. Thus, for example, CUNY is responsible for language programs in Manhattan and the Bronx, and for the work/study and GED programs in Brooklyn. (The BEGIN language program and a second GED program in Brooklyn are handled by the Board of Education.) The providers were charged with developing the structures and processes for implementing HRA's program design.

Funding for the BEGIN education programs flows through two streams. The programs in Manhattan and the Bronx are supported by JOBS monies matched against city tax levy monies allocated for literacy purposes. The programs in Brooklyn and Queens, in contrast, are funded by the New York State Education Department through the Education for Gainful Employment (EDGE) program, created by that department in response to the JOBS legislation. EDGE apportions state dollars, matched by federal dollars, to the 57 county social service districts and in New York City to the Human Resources Administration, which acts as a conduit for the funds.

EDGE is the sole funder of the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program, whose annual budget of $1.3 million has remained constant over the two years preceding the site visit. While HRA has a contractual relationship with the BEGIN education programs that are funded through tax levy dollars and exercises financial control over these programs, it has no financial control over the programs like those in Brooklyn that receive EDGE funds. The relationships between HRA and these programs are defined by Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) which have no binding force on the programs but which nonetheless shape program operations. (Thus, for example, Brooklyn College's MOU with HRA for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 1994 states, among other things, that the Work/Study Program will enroll 1,300 clients, maintain an average daily attendance of 15 to 20 students per class, and result in 130 clients entering into employment-targets that all staff members take seriously.)

HRA recommended that the State Education Department designate Brooklyn College (rather than other schools in the City University system located in the borough of Brooklyn) to operate the BEGIN work/study program. HRA had had previous and successful dealings with the college's Assistant Dean for Adult and Continuing Education, who was known for running excellent programs. The Education

Department accepted HRA's advice and its reasoning that it was better to go forward with a known entity than with an unknown one.

The New York State JOBS program and the BEGIN program were both designed and implemented under Democratic administrations in Albany and New York City. Since that time, both administrations have changed, and the emphasis now more than ever is on achieving rapid reductions in welfare caseloads and costs. At this writing, threatened funding cutbacks in city literacy monies, in CUNY funding, and in the EDGE Program have raised concern among the city's literacy providers; it remains to be seen whether the BEGIN education programs will be affected by these cuts.

B. Strengthening BEGIN's Employment Focus

The history of the BEGIN education programs makes it clear that they were always intended to have a strong employment focus and link to work readiness. However, at the outset, instructors at the education programs were strongly resistant to tying education to a work-contextualized curriculum and to employment, and the literacy programs they were operating were fairly traditional. The result was considerable conflict between teachers at the education programs and the CSRs at the service delivery level.[11] In the teachers' view, CSRs knew little about education, cared little about the educational problems and progress of their clients, and believed (erroneously, according to the teachers) that most AFDC recipients could work; the teachers also questioned the availability of above-poverty-wage jobs for welfare clients. In the view of the CSRs, the educators had little understanding of the political context of welfare reform, didn't understand the importance of employment outcomes, didn't believe in the legitimacy of a work requirement, and wanted students to remain in the classroom indefinitely. Each side had deeply held assumptions, and there was little effort to seek common ground.[12]

In 1992, HRA hired a new BEGIN Director of Education to resolve these "culture wars" (as she termed them). A public administrator by background and an educator by training, with a strong interest in organizational learning, she was, by all accounts, able to communicate effectively with both the literacy community and HRA. She conducted some 60 focus groups with administrators, teachers, HRA staff, and clerical employees, challenging the assumptions of all parties and pointing out that neither the

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[11]Interestingly, the former BEGIN Director of Education recalls that relationships between senior administrators of HRA and the education provider agencies were cordial, but that their willingness to seek common solutions did not filter down to line staff.

[12]Several informants told the researchers that at many programs, racial and class differences between the teachers and CSRs exacerbated tensions between the groups.

educators' nor the welfare workers' position was fully supported by available data. She especially tried to impress upon the teachers that the national political climate had shifted, and that the highest priority had become to move welfare recipients into work. As she wrote in retrospect about the changes she sought to create:

> With this...shift came a deemphasis on the singular role of education/literacy as the best means to self-sufficiency, employment, or employment persistence, particularly if the education program is long-term and general, as opposed to vocational or occupationally specific.... We discovered that... to be involved with BEGIN Education is to fundamentally understand, and accept, the implicit assumption of the JOBS First initiative [an initiative announced by the New York State Department of Social Services in 1994 to strengthen employment-related and other services for welfare recipients to speed their entry into, and retention of, jobs]. The challenge then became achieving shared goals-program excellence, client skills for self-sufficiency, placement in work or training-and accomplishing these within the shortest time possible. (Woolis, 1995, pp. 5-6)

The focus groups were called upon not only to identify problems but also to develop solutions. In keeping with her interest in organizational development, the BEGIN Education Director was concerned that the education providers build capacity for problem-solving at the site level through a process of continuous identification of issues, innovation, and feedback. In 1993 she crafted a document that summarized the changes to be undertaken and a time frame for their implementation, and that stated BEGIN's educational philosophy succinctly: "Education should be related to the world of work and focus on the development of skills which are necessary in obtaining and keeping a job" (Woolis, 1993, p. 7). The same document set forth the mission of BEGIN education: "To provide a quality driven, continuous improvement education system for BEGIN clients which will enhance their access to work and/or training, enabling them to become economically self-sufficient" (*Ibid.*).

While the philosophy and mission of BEGIN education were being revised, and in part to operationalize the new conception of the program, a number of initiatives were undertaken (some of which are still in the process of being fully adopted): a move toward employing a full-time teaching staff (which HRA can encourage but not mandate of the education providers); expansion of the initial orientation and assessment process from one week to two[13]; an emphasis on helping clients to develop

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[13]This began at the Brooklyn College Work/Study Program in October 1994.

"employment portfolios" and to use these in student assessment[14]; development of a curriculum more fully contextualized for work and largely centered around both the employment portfolio and the students' worksite experiences; introduction of a Total Quality Management approach; and a concerted staff development effort, including all-site conferences at which innovative ideas could be presented and discussed.

As discussed below, the teaching staff of the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program continue to have some ambivalence about an employment-centered view of the purpose of education for welfare recipients. On the other hand, they clearly perceive their goal as teachers in BEGIN as that of finding ways in which to put that perspective into practice in the classroom. If this program is typical, it appears that, unlike the situation three years ago, BEGIN educators now share a common understanding of what they are about, and an understanding that, moreover, meshes with HRA's original and ongoing vision of what the programs should be.[15]

C. The Development of the Occupational Cluster Concept

The Assistant Dean for Adult and Continuing Education at Brooklyn College, who initiated the concept of work/study classes focused on occupational clusters, was attracted to that approach for two reasons. First, she saw it as a way of incorporating a greater emphasis on employment into the work/study curricula, an emphasis made all the more necessary by the imposition of job placement quotas on the BEGIN education programs. Second, the Adult and Continuing Education Division had operated thematic, contextualized ABE and GED programs open to the general community for several years; over time, the teachers in these programs had become very excited about this strategy. (These teachers were useful advocates for the approach with the work/study program teachers.)

How to develop curricula centered around occupational clusters was the subject of discussion at a number of work/study program staff meetings. The teachers decided the occupations on which the clusters should center, electing to include health-related and clerical fields because of strong expected

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[14]As the former Director of Education told the researcher, while the education programs could not retain most students until they got a GED, they could equip all students with portfolios containing documents that would serve as indicators of accomplishment to prospective employers (and to the students themselves): attendance records, a resume, letters of recommendation, writing samples, etc.

[15]It is worth noting that at many BEGIN education programs this consistency of vision was achieved only by the departure of some of the most recalcitrant staff members from the program, either at their own initiative or upon being asked to leave.

employer demand in these areas. The Assistant Dean was also committed to exposing welfare recipients to the possibilities presented by occupations that are nontraditional for women (e.g., jobs in the construction industry), especially because such occupations often pay better and offer more attractive benefits than more traditional "pink-collar" jobs. The teachers also decided who would cover which cluster and what general work issues should be discussed in all the clusters.

Like teacher input into decision-making, staff development efforts were also important to successful implementation of the cluster approach. Both CUNY and Brooklyn College provided technical assistance in designing curricula, and teachers were given time to research the fields they were teaching. Because two teachers were responsible for each occupational cluster, no teacher had to shoulder the entire burden of curriculum development, and there was considerable mutual exchange both among teachers within the work/study program and with teachers in other programs.

Movement toward the occupational clusters proceeded during late 1993. When the approach was initially put in place, teachers delivered a curriculum that was centered on specific occupational areas, but students were assigned to the clusters on the basis of ability level.[16] Subsequently, the program elected to give students their choice of cluster and to phase the clusters in over time, as teachers' time was freed up. Four classes, one in each of the four cluster areas, started in November 1994, four classes in three areas started in December, four classes in three areas also started in January, and two classes in two areas started in February, so that by the end of that month, all fourteen classes had converted to the cluster model.

Having implemented the cluster concept, teachers continue to work both jointly and individually to modify and improve the curriculum. Teachers have both formal and informal meetings at which they share ideas on materials and approaches.

III. Key Elements of the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program

A. The Setting

The Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program is situated in downtown Brooklyn, in rented space on the ninth and tenth floors of a parochial school, both because of space limitations on the college

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[16]As noted above, students whose skills levels are too low to benefit from the work/study program are referred to lower-level ABE programs during Orientation and Assessment.

campus and because its current location makes it readily accessible to all major subway and bus lines in the borough. The space was remodeled to accommodate the program, and the premises, while institutional, are generally pleasant, clean, and bright. Classrooms are typically decorated with posters (often from the "Women of Hope: African Americans Who Made a Difference" series, including Ella J. Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Toni Morrison); maps (including maps of the New York City subway system, the United States, the West Indies, Africa, and the world); newspaper articles about welfare reform proposals and state budget cuts; and collages made up of xeroxes of GED certificates of successful former students. Inspirational slogans line the walls of classrooms and hallways (e.g., "They can because they think they can," "Don't be afraid your life will end, be afraid that it will never begin," "You're a terrific student"). There is a computer lab equipped with 12 IBM-compatible computers, as well as a teacher's lounge and conference room.

B. The Structure and Schedule

The program offers 14 work/study classes and two GED classes over any two-week period. (In any given week, seven "A" work/study classes are at the program while seven "B" classes are at their worksites, or vice versa.)

Orientation and Assessment, regular education classes, and worksite activities all occupy four hours a day, for five days a week, thereby meeting the 20 hours a week JOBS participation standard.[17] Students in the work/study program attend from 9:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. and those in the GED program from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. All students receive "training-related expenses" -allowances for transportation and child care. Work-study students may also elect to remain for enrichment activities held two afternoons a week for 1 ½ hours each time, and if they do so, they are entitled to a lunch allowance of $2 a day as well.[18] However, there is a general sense that the turnout for the enrichment classes has been disappointing.

The program is in session throughout the year, with a one-week "furlough" in June and a two-week furlough before Labor Day. During the school year, week-long break periods are scheduled to coincide with days when public schools are not in session, and BEGIN classes are not held on other days

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[17]Because students in the O & A and education classes are given a 30-minute break each day, actual instructional time comes to 17 ½ hours a week.

[18]The enrichment activities at the time of the researchers' visit included: writing with computers, conversational Spanish, math review, "computers and careers" (basic word processing), and group support. The enrichment classes are taught by regular program teachers.

when schools are closed all day (e.g., for snow days or staff development days).[19] During the summer, BEGIN has funding to pay for day camp or babysitters for children under age 13. Clients often express reluctance to leave 13- and 14-year-olds unattended. Staff try, often successfully, to induce the caretaker of a client's younger children to take care of her 13- or 14-year-old as well, and they also assist clients in preparing applications for their 13- and 14-year-old children to participate in the Summer Youth Employment Program.[20] However, if need be, the client's participation may be deferred until the end of the summer.

The implementation of the occupational cluster choice approach marked a new approach to admitting new work/study participants. Before November 1994, the program had an open-entry policy, with new students joining classes every two weeks; this is still the practice for GED students. Starting then, as noted above, the work/study program switched to an approach whereby students enrolled in cohorts for specific occupational cluster classes that were starting up at that time. Teachers have generally applauded the change, since the schedule allows for greater class cohesion and for greater continuity in the curriculum over time. The cohort approach is not without problems, however. First, the occupational cluster class or classes opening at a given time may not match some students' interests.[21] Moreover, because of absenteeism and because students are continually siphoned away from the academic classes into jobs and training programs, class enrollment falls and average daily attendance drops below the 15-student minimum level specified in the program's MOU with HRA. These issues are discussed further in the last section of the paper.

C. The Students

The Brooklyn work/study program has an agreement to serve 1,300 students a year in Orientation and Assessment, although, as discussed below, substantial numbers of those seen in O & A do not subsequently enroll in on-site activities. At any given time, approximately 400 students are actually enrolled.

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[19]However, on days when public schools are closed only for half a day, BEGIN attendance is still required.

[20]SYEP slots are limited, however, and children of BEGIN students do not have priority for the program.

[21]In general, staff try to assign students to worksite positions that match their cluster assignments (e.g., as a child care aide in a child care center). However, when there is a mismatch between a student's vocational interest and the occupational cluster to which she is assigned, this can sometimes be remedied by her worksite placement. Thus, e.g., a student who is placed in a child care cluster but who is interested in clerical occupations might be given a work experience position as an office aide in a daycare center.

Ethnically, the students are representative of Brooklyn's AFDC population. Of 562 students seen in O & A between July 1, 1994 and the end of the year, 69 percent were black (including a large contingent of students from Caribbean countries), 26 percent Hispanic, and 4 percent white or other. In terms of age, the largest single group of students–85 percent–was between 25 and 44 years old. Ninety-nine percent were women.

Data on clients seen in O & A between July 1, 1993 and June 30, 1994 indicate a preponderance of lower-level readers: 60 percent had TABE scores below the 5.0-grade level, 15 percent had scores between the 5.0 and 6.9 grade levels, 12 percent read between the 7.0 and 8.9 grade levels, and 12 percent read at the 9th-grade level or higher. Since the time these data were collected, the program has undergone staff reductions and has imposed a requirement that students read at the fourth-grade level or higher, but poor reading skills remain the norm. The program tries to screen out individuals with learning disabilities or special needs at O & A; program administrators note that the program is not equipped to serve such students well.[22]

Teachers often describe their students as lacking self-esteem and as having a strong propensity to believe that they cannot learn and will fail at whatever they try. They also note that many clients have serious problems: they are often the victims of rape, incest, or abuse; their children are sometimes in trouble in school and with the law; and some live on the brink of homelessness or have other serious housing issues. Nonetheless, teachers generally rate their students as having a high interest in learning, as willing to work quite hard and as very cooperative in class, and as wanting to be in the program.

Indeed, the Orientation and Assessment leaders comment that many students are resentful of the attendance requirement when they first come to O & A and are anxious about their ability to learn. Some are especially irate about the worksite requirement, since they would like to go back to school but not to work. However, according to staff, students quickly come to see the program as a friendly, supportive environment and that they are able to learn. Moreover, administrators, teachers, and other staff members agree that students have strongly "bought into" the idea that they need further education–and particularly a GED–before they will be ready to enter the labor market. This is in part because in the past many students have held jobs that lasted only a short time, and they see the credential as giving them a stronger footing with employers. It appears that the program's emphasis on

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[22]Administrators add that the problem is not a trivial one: many clients tell work/study staff that when they were in school, they were assigned to special education classes.

employment does not lead many students to question their beliefs about the importance of getting more education before going to work. According to the program's Client Service Representatives, who, as discussed below, are largely responsible for "next-step" assignments, three-quarters of the students want to continue their education after BEGIN; only a minority want to get a job immediately.[23]

D. The Staff

The 28-person Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program staff comprises employees of two entities: the CUNY Research Foundation (which handles payroll and other matters for the CUNY BEGIN programs) and HRA.

On the Research Foundation payroll are three groups. Administrative staff includes the program director, assistant director, office manager, two clerical staff members, and a data clerk. Instructional staff includes seven work/study teachers (each of whom has an "A" class and a "B" class), two GED teachers, and three tutors; one tutor works in the computer lab and two serve as "floating" substitute teachers. Student Services staff include the Orientation and Assessment Coordinator, an O & A teacher, an O & A aide, and two job developers. The five HRA employees include four Client Service Representatives (CSRs) who serve as case managers and a Site Supervisor who oversees their work. All staff members are full-time except for the tutors and O & A aide, whose positions are half-time.

The Teachers. The teaching staff includes six women and three men and is relatively young: eight of the nine instructors are under 46 years old, and three are under 36. The staff is also multicultural, including four teachers who are non-Hispanic whites, two Hispanics, one Afro-Caribbean, one Asian, and one Guyanese East Indian.

According to the project director, in hiring teachers, some prior experience teaching adults figures more prominently than specific education credentials beyond a bachelor's degree. Nonetheless, all but one of the teachers have completed at least some graduate work, and five hold Master's degrees.

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[23]In sitting in on classes and speaking with students, the researchers heard comments that corroborated the CSRs' views. While some students talked about the possibility of earning a GED while working, others insisted that they needed to get a GED before looking for work. One student, for instance, said that after obtaining her GED, she would pursue "whatever door is open" but believed that without this credential, she would have no hope for advancement; she described the experience of her sister-in-law, who has worked at the Metropolitan Transit Authority for many years but has not been promoted because she lacks a GED. Another student, acknowledging that she still has "a way to go" before getting her GED, sees no hope of achieving her employment objective–to become a corrections officer–without it and opined that in these difficult times, even a GED might not be a sufficient credential and that she might have to go on to college.

On average, the teachers have had 6.5 years of experience teaching adults, including 2.8 years with the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program; before joining the program, five of the teachers had held jobs in which they worked mainly with welfare recipients. Three of the nine teachers have been with the program since its inception, and turnover appears to be fairly low. Along with the full-time nature of the position (staff are paid for 35 hours a week, including 20 hours of class time) and the full package of fringe benefits (including vacation and retirement benefits), the project director notes, the competitive salary structure (most teachers earn between $30,000 and $35,000 a year) makes it fairly easy to hire good staff. Three of the instructors also hold second, part-time teaching jobs that occupy six hours a week or less.

Teachers, in addition to their instructional duties, are responsible for teaching a weekly enhancement class, for visiting one worksite per month, and for keeping attendance rosters. Almost all the teachers also say that they have had one-to-one conversations with more than half of their students about the students' past educational experiences, goals, or attendance and progress as well as about their personal lives or personal problems. All the teachers believe, too, that it is quite important or very important to develop a counseling relationship with students.

Job Developers and Client Service Representatives. In theory, the roles of job developers and CSRs with respect to post-work/study activities are quite distinct: job developers are responsible for working with students considered job-ready and for achieving the program's goal of 10 percent employment placements, while CSRs are responsible for ensuring that 50 percent of the students move into appropriate next-step activities other than employment (e.g., job club, vocational training). In practice, however, the distinctions are sometimes blurred. Job developers have established linkages with local agencies and businesses that have taken on BEGIN students; the massive Diocese of Brooklyn has been an especially fruitful source of jobs. But they have also used personal connections to get BEGIN students into training programs. Furthermore, the job developers count toward their 10 percent quota not only direct placements of current students but also employment that follows students' entry into a next-step training program[24]--or, indeed, any employment that follows the work/study program. (As one job developer put it, "Some clients have worked with us and then disappeared into a job.") Thus, the job developers spend a good deal of time tracking former students (often with the CSRs' assistance) to

[24]In such cases, the BEGIN Work/Study Program and the training program share credit for the job placement.

ascertain their employment status.

The CSRs, for their part, have many responsibilities other than arranging next-step placements. A CSR is assigned to each classroom, where he or she is responsible for matching students with worksites and maintaining weekly contact with worksite supervisors; visiting the worksites along with the teachers; meeting with the students to see how the latter are faring in their classes and on the job; following up absentees; if necessary, initiating the "conciliation" process that can ultimately lead to sanctioning for those who consistently fail to attend without good cause; submitting attendance rosters to OES; and arranging for training-related expense payments. (In the view of the CSR Site Supervisor, it is unfortunate that this last aspect of their work accounts for a large part of their interactions with students, because students often see CSRs as the people who "do the money" and hold them accountable for mistakes that are not their fault.) Teachers and CSRs meet routinely every two weeks to discuss problem students and those who have frequently been absent (whether or not such absence is excused), and informal teacher-CSR conversations occur almost daily.[25] CSRs are also committed to providing continued assistance to former students who maintain contact with the program.

CSRs, like the teachers, counsel the students about family problems or housing issues. Like the teachers, however, CSRs are not counselors; they lack both time and counseling expertise.[26] A former counselor resigned and has not been replaced to date. The program's assistant director, who is in charge of student services, says that she has access to the counselor from another program when she needs to discuss particular cases. She and the CSRs use citywide resource guides and additional listings they have created based on their own experience to refer students with particular problems to agencies that can address the students' needs (e.g., mental health agencies, programs dealing with substance abuse), hotlines, and self-help groups. However, the absence of a counselor is widely perceived as a marked program gap, especially by the teachers.

E. Program Climate and Management

The survey administered to the work/study and GED teachers asked their views about a number

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[25]The majority of teachers believe that these discussions are useful in helping them to meet students' needs.

[26]To qualify as a Client Service Representative (a civil service position), applicants must either have a four-year college degree or commensurate experience.

of aspects of program management and about the general atmosphere.[27] The majority of teachers agreed in some measure that the program was a good place to work and were quite satisfied with their current teaching positions.

The majority of respondents strongly agreed that teachers in the program were encouraged to experiment with their teaching. Perhaps for this reason, most teachers said they were willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that usually expected of teachers and that teachers in the program were continually learning and seeking new ideas. Teachers have also availed themselves of professional development opportunities. One teacher participated in a three-week-long "Leadership Institute" sponsored by the New York City Literacy Assistance Center, and a second completed LAC's multicultural awareness seminar. Two instructors attended a three-credit class given by CUNY on portfolio development and assessment.

The majority of teachers agreed that there was a good deal of cooperative effort among staff members, and they consulted with other staff frequently regarding both student problems and general educational issues. They also agreed that the program's administration was aware of the problems faced by staff and that its behavior toward staff was supportive and encouraging.

The teachers' positive attitudes toward the program are especially notable in view of the fact that many express doubts about key elements of the program design, especially the heavy emphasis on employment and the 20-week time limit. Some teachers, for example, say that they spend so much time helping students develop resumes or prepare for job interviews that they are unable to work on basic literacy skills (e.g., reading for understanding and to gather information, spelling) or to use literacy as a vehicle for teaching broad "life skills." They also feel that 20 weeks (half spent in the worksites) are insufficient, especially because continuity of instruction is interrupted by the worksite component (with some learning loss an almost inevitable result) and because students are taken out of class to hear presentations on training programs or other work-related issues. Nonetheless, although teachers may not fully subscribe to the objectives of BEGIN education, they acknowledge that while the program's vocational focus has constrained their activities in some respects, it has enhanced their creativity in others.

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[27]A parallel survey was not developed for other program personnel.

IV. The Brooklyn College Work/Study Program in Action

A. Intake, Orientation, and Assessment

Unlike the situation in many places, in New York City new applicants for AFDC who are JOBS-mandatory and recipients already on the rolls who become mandatory (e.g., when their youngest child turns three years old) are not referred to JOBS/BEGIN directly from the city's welfare income support offices,[28] although income support personnel feed the relevant information into a computerized data base, the Welfare Management System (WMS). Rather, BEGIN handles its own "recruitment" and intake through centralized BEGIN intake offices located in each borough. Intake staff access the WMS to identify mandatory cases within their geographic catchment areas and call them in for an initial assessment. Between July 1, 1994 and January 27, 1995, 100,653 AFDC recipients were seen by the BEGIN intake centers across the four boroughs; 17,718 clients were seen by the two BEGIN intake centers in Brooklyn.

In part because of the volume of cases, the intake assessment is typically not very detailed, rarely lasting more than 45 minutes, and educational testing is not performed. The main job of the intake workers is to find an appropriate BEGIN activity for each individual client, selecting from options that include, besides education, job club, training, career counseling, or internships; they can also exempt clients who were improperly deemed to be mandatory or defer those with problems that would interfere with immediate participation (e.g., short-term medical problems, upcoming court appearances). Clients have a good deal of choice as to their BEGIN assignment; those who express interest in education (and are not already enrolled in school) are generally referred to the BEGIN work/study or language program in their borough unless, as occasionally happens, slots there are completely filled.

All clients assigned to the BEGIN education programs first participate in Orientation and Assessment (O & A) activities conducted at the program sites. At intake they are given a letter instructing them to attend O & A on a specified start date (and warning them that their benefits may be reduced if they fail to attend), and a list of those scheduled to attend O & A is also forwarded to the programs. A new cohort starts O & A every two weeks, and clients rarely have to wait more than six weeks between intake and the start of O & A. Generally, about 75 percent of those scheduled to attend

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[28]In New York City, these offices, formerly known by the conventional term "income maintenance offices," have been renamed "income support" offices to reflect the idea that welfare is not intended to "maintain" income over the long term.

each session actually show up. Those who do not appear the first time around are rescheduled if they call the program with a plausible reason for their absence; if they do not, the "conciliation" process (which can ultimately lead to a sanction) is begun.

At all BEGIN education programs, O & A lasts two weeks. Originally, it was scheduled for only one week, but it was extended because of high attrition both from the O & A sessions themselves and from subsequent classes. The O & A Coordinator at the Brooklyn Work/Study Program and others believe that the longer sessions have been successful in reducing absenteeism because they allow for more thorough screening, give students more time to get acclimated to a daily routine, and afford more opportunities for students to make friends with other students and to establish a relationship of trust with program staff. The O & A Coordinator further notes that a two-week-long O & A component affords staff a chance to deal with attitude problems and resolve minor social conflicts (e.g., with staff members or with other students) that would otherwise result in poor attendance at school-and in subsequent poor performance at the workplace.

At the Brooklyn site, the Orientation and Assessment group, which generally numbers about 60, is divided into two classes which follow essentially identical sequences of activities.
As part of the research effort, the first day of one O & A class was observed.

> Twenty-five clients were scheduled to attend this session; by the time the class started, 18 students (including one man) were present.
>
> The leader introduced herself by her first name, welcomed the group, and asked what the word "orientation" means. When this query elicited no response, she asked, "Why are you here?" A student replied, "They want us to get off welfare." From this juncture on, the leader skillfully used the students' responses to bring out the main points she wished to make. For example, she asked the students whether it is easy to get off welfare, and one student replies, "It [the education class] is a start." The leader noted that the BEGIN program itself is a start, and that this is the function of O & A in particular. She went on to say:
>
> > The Orientation and Assessment is to figure out whether this program is right for you. You have to do something, but if this isn't it, we'll help you find something else. We want to know more about you-not just about your reading, writing, and math, but what are your talents? What do you do at home that can turn into a job? You'll learn as much from each other as from the teachers.
>
> The O & A leader then asked students at each of the five tables in the room to make lists on newsprint of all the things they might get out of the program. She posted these lists on the blackboard and used them to clarify the purpose of BEGIN education. For

example, "GED" appeared on many lists; the leader explained that BEGIN is not a GED program, although she added that most BEGIN students eventually do earn a GED. She then explained the work experience component (which appeared to be news to most of the students), defusing potential negative reaction by saying, "You don't get money for this, but what do you get?" and emphasizing that work experience (the inevitable response to the question) would look good on a resume. At the same time, she made it clear that worksite positions are unlikely to "roll over" into permanent jobs. Among other themes that emerged during this presentation were: that BEGIN is not a training program and that students would not get a certificate, although they would get some work experience and computer skills; that the program has employment specialists who would work with the students through their program stay; and that (in response to an item on the list saying "Better life for me and my kids") being in the program would enable students to assist their children with homework.

At this point, the students were asked if anyone had a child under three, had a high school diploma, or was pregnant; the aim of these questions was to screen out individuals who had been inappropriately referred from intake.[29] The students then viewed a short video made by students in a class at the site. Short and humorous, the video was effective in conveying the idea that BEGIN was a good place to be, with students in the video talking about what they had gained from the program.

The CSR Site Supervisor led the rest of the day's activities. He reviewed a list of obstacles to attendance and emphasized the importance of calling in the event of absence and providing written documentation of reasons for absenteeism. He then explained the attendance requirements, the procedures for receiving payments for transportation and child care,[30] and (briefly) the sanctioning process.

He closed by mentioning current welfare reform proposals, including threatened cuts and

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[29]O & A leaders complain that the intake units frequently send people to the program who should not be there. (Indeed, at the session that was observed, one student appeared barely able to speak English; she told the leader, through another student who acted as interpreter, that she was already in a Spanish-language GED program and she wanted to go back there, and the leader had her meet with a CSR to arrange for a transfer.) However, statistical data indicate that only 1.6 percent of the 1153 individuals assigned to the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program between July 1, 1994 and January 17, 1995 should have been exempt from participation altogether. An additional 7 percent were transferred to other BEGIN programs (including GED and language programs) or enrolled in non-OES education or training; within this group, however, only students reassigned to ESL can be thought of as true misreferrals from intake, since during O & A, the TABE is administered to determine whether a student should be sent to a low-level ABE class or to a GED class.

Another complaint about intake appears somewhat more justified: that intake workers often do not tell clients much about the program, and that they do not explain that it combines work experience with education. An O & A leader noted that clients are usually fearful and anxious about what the work experience component will involve and that they see it more as an obligation they must fulfill in order to get their welfare check than as a career opportunity.

[30]After the first two weeks, the latter payments are paid into automatic teller machines at special check-cashing places set up for welfare recipients.

the imposition of time limits, and urged students to take advantage of the opportunity they had to get back on the track with education, noting that they might not have this chance again. He also reiterated the point that attending the program would have a powerful positive effect on the clients' children and noted, "You're only here for five months. You may not achieve your career goals in five months, but this is a start." But he also told the students that they would be through with the BEGIN work/study program only when they had moved into another activity or into a job, not just when the calendar months were up, and he advised them that if they found a training program they wanted to start the next month, they could enroll in it right away, without completing the work/study program. Thus, the first day of O & A both began and ended with the idea that the work/study program is only a beginning.

Over the next nine days of O & A, a variety of activities take place. From an administrative standpoint, the most important function of O & A is to perform a more thorough assessment of the student than was conducted at BEGIN intake, in order to decide upon the student's course of action in BEGIN over the next several months. Typically, on the second or third day, the vocabulary, reading comprehension, mathematical computation, and mathematical concepts and applications sections of the TABE are administered to determine whether the student will be referred out to a lower-level ABE class, enter an on-site work/study or GED class, or, in some instances, be referred out to training.[31] During O & A, too, the student completes an Employment Development Plan, selects an occupational module to attend from the choices that are available, and is assigned to a worksite.

From the standpoint of preparing students for classes and for the worksites, however, the O & A leaders regard exercises aimed at building self-esteem, mutual support, and a sense of empowerment as no less critical than the TABE and the class and worksite assignments. Thus, one morning students make picture diagrams or collages that illustrate the course of their lives or express their dreams, and

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[31]The teachers and other staff members do not necessarily view the TABE as a reliable assessment tool; OES decided to administer the test, however, because many education and training programs that serve as next-step activities require that students score at a certain level on the TABE.

Since the lowest level of the TABE requires reading skills equal to about the end of the second grade and is unreliable for beginning readers, an individual reading inventory is also administered to low-level readers to determine whether they should be transferred to off-site ABE literacy classes. (The program experimented with giving the individual reading inventory to all students but abandoned this effort because the process was time-consuming, taking about 30 minutes per student, and required the participation of the teachers to cover all the students attending O & A. Staff are now considering alternative measures that could easily be administered to all students, such as a word recognition test.)

A GED predictor test is administered to those reading around the 8th-grade level to determine whether they would be better suited for a work/study or GED class.

Along with other information from the O & A sessions, the TABE scores are given to the teachers as background on their students before the start of class.

explain these to their classmates; another day, the O & A class visits the post office for voter registration. Other activities include: completion of an Employment Development Plan listing each client's work experience and short- and long-term career and educational goals; meetings with the CSRs to discuss clients' problems and possible referrals to other agencies; completion of a career interest and aptitude inventory[32]; and a presentation on welfare reform.

B. Inside the Classroom

Four interlocking themes emerged as particularly prominent from the researchers' observations of Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program classes, their discussions with teachers, and their reviews of curricular materials:

- **A strong emphasis on preparation for work.**
- **Sensitivity and responsiveness to students' interests and to their varied cultural backgrounds.**
- **Teachers' efforts to build students' self-esteem and to create an atmosphere of mutual support in their classrooms.**
- **Use of a variety of materials and instructional approaches to put these themes into practice and to appeal to students of mixed ability levels.**

While these themes are important in all the classes, they are considered below principally as they relate to the work/study classes. The primary focus of the GED instructors is on equipping students to pass the GED test; the classes therefore provide instruction in the test areas (language, essay-writing, math, science, and social studies). Like the work/study teachers, however, the GED teachers actively engage students in thinking about their futures and about possible career choices. The teachers estimate that 30-40 percent of their reading and writing assignments relate in some way to work. For example, a selection from a psychology text on self-esteem led students to talk about their previous experiences in the workplace. In one class that was observed, the students were assigned to write an essay in which they were to identify a talent or natural ability they already had and then to note the steps they would take to convert that talent into a job.

In the following discussion, particular emphasis is given to the theme of preparation for work,

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[32]The inventory used is the *Self-Directed Search, Form E* developed by John L. Holland. (Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., 1990).

since the use of a contextualized curriculum centering on occupations is the program's most innovative feature.

Preparation for Work. In all classes, education is stressed as preparation for a future in which it is assumed that students will be working. This emphasis is especially pronounced in the work/study classes, which seek to develop reading and writing skills (and, to a much lesser extent, math and computer skills[33]) in the context of learning about specific occupational areas.

The curricula for the different cluster areas include both some topics that are specific to each cluster and topics that cut across all four areas. In all of them, students read about employment-related situations, and some attention is given to such topics as reading and answering employment ads and completing job application forms, as well as to such general work-readiness skills as following directions. In all clusters, too, students' worksite experiences are incorporated into class discussions and writing activities.

Finally, writing is emphasized in all cluster areas. Some writing projects are long-term: for example, in the nontraditional/exploratory area, students were assigned to write a report on a career of interest, for which they were to interview someone who is working in that job or to describe what they had learned from books they had read about the career. In some classes, students keep daily journals and are encouraged to write about whatever they like; in others, students use the journals to record their worksite experiences. In one class, the instructor asked her students to write in their journals about things that made them angry; the entries included mention of stray bullets, lead paint, asthma, interactions with welfare, and eviction notices, and one student wrote about her murdered son. The teacher reasoned that the journals would allow students to understand and better control feelings that could lead to workplace conflicts; she also felt that through the journals, students could assess their performance and progress in acquiring life skills as well as literacy skills.

Within each cluster, certain occupationally-specific topics are stressed. In the child care cluster,

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[33]Teachers say that it is more difficult to relate math to work than it is reading and writing. The focus of math instruction is on skill-building, and math is reviewed using packets of worksheets on multiplication, division, decimals, fractions, algebra, and geometry photocopied from standard GED workbooks and other books. Students generally work on their packets individually or in small groups, with help from the teacher; sometimes whole-class activities are involved as well.

The relatively small number of computers (12) and the limited amount of time each class has in the computer lab (1 ½ hours a week) make it impractical to use computer-assisted instruction extensively. Rather, students use the computers to familiarize themselves with various aspects of the machine (e.g., the mouse) as well as to type and edit essays and other things they have written.

these include child development, parenting, safety, and dealing with anger. The clerical classes focus on such skills as writing memos and letters and answering the phone. The health care curriculum covers both individual and family health issues (including first aid and CPR) and work in health care settings, such as nursing homes and hospitals. The nontraditional/exploratory cluster deals with students' perceptions of work, exposes them to various occupations that are nontraditional for women (e.g., plumber, electrician, bus driver), and engages them in investigating possible career choices.

Contextualization of the curriculum can result in different types of classroom activities that reflect teachers' individual styles, preferences, and understandings of their instructional mission. The following two descriptions of contextualized language activities, based on the researchers' observations, exemplify this diversity.

> In the first case, the teacher's instructional goal for the day was to expose students to a range of health-related occupations. In so doing, however, she also sought to improve students' spelling ability and to engage them in reading for information and presenting this information orally to others. Finally, she used the class as an opportunity to exhort students to look for work *now*.
>
> This class had started some four months earlier with 18 students. Several former students had moved on to a next-step activity, and four were employed, three of them as home health aides.
>
> Eight students were in attendance on the day observed. As she does every morning, the health cluster instructor started the day by giving the class a spelling quiz on health-related words. This morning, the words pertained to health-related occupations and included: home health aide, pharmacist, physical therapist, social worker, respiratory therapist, registered nurse (a student asked if she could just write "RN" and everyone, including the teacher, laughed--an indication of the relaxed, friendly atmosphere in the class), licensed practical nurse, and medical record secretary. After they took down the words, several students rushed to the front to put their answers on the blackboard, where the teacher and their classmates corrected them. The corrections were many: misspellings included "pharmasist," "phisical therpist," "license practical nurse," "respatory therapist." As the teacher wrote the correct answers on the board, the students copied them into their notebooks. The highest number of correct answers was 17 out of 20; one student commented, apparently without embarrassment, that she got five right. The energy level was high throughout.
>
> The class moved on to reading. The teacher distributed to each student a sheet describing occupations in the medical field, noting that some of them did not require a high school diploma (although most, in fact, called for a considerable amount of post-secondary education). The students read the descriptions silently and then explained to their classmates what the occupation involves and what kind of training is required. In

the ensuing discussion, students talked about what people in various nursing positions do, based on their own experiences at the worksite; the teacher, who has also worked in a hospital, interjected comments about her experiences there as well. When a student expressed disbelief on reading that an LPN's starting salary is about $26,000 a year, the teacher used the remark as an opportunity to incorporate a quick math lesson: multiplying the hourly wage ($15) by 7.5 hours a day by 5 days a week by 4 weeks a month by 12 months a year yields $27,000. A student said, "I can live with this!" and others laughed in agreement. The teacher also commented on the generous health-related benefits that hospital-based LPNs receive.

As the class wound down before the break, the teacher asked the students their opinions of threatened budget cuts, which include the closing of municipal hospitals, the elimination of late-night subways, and cuts in training programs. She urged the students to apply for jobs now, not wait until the cuts have been made. She told them, "You are at an advantage–you have experience in a job." She encouraged them to take even low-paying jobs, since the students would receive transitional child care and Medicaid benefits to ease the move off of welfare. Some students said they need a job now and then would get a GED. Others said they want to go to school first; one stated that she had to get a GED first to get any job. The class will have only 11 more days with this teacher, and students freely expressed affection for her and gratitude for her warmth and support.

In the second case, the instructor used the reading selection to teach both job-specific and general vocabulary words and to improve students' skills in reading for information. The reading was also a vehicle for students to examine their own ideas and assumptions about working.

A nontraditional/exploratory class began by reviewing a chapter they had previously read from the book *Alone in a Crowd* (by Jean Reith Schroedel), a collection of stories about women's experiences in nontraditional careers. The chapter was written by a woman who worked as a "shipscaler" [an entry-level position in a shipyard involving diverse menial tasks]. The teacher distributed two vocabulary lists based on the reading, one containing words used in the context of phrases from the reading (e.g., "The greatest *discrimination* women face"), and the other listing specific work-related words (e.g., supervisor, sandblasters). In small groups, students discussed a list of 12 questions prepared by the teacher about the reading, among them: "What factors did she [the protagonist] consider before she went down to the shipyard? Did these prevent her from making the attempt she did?" "How would you describe the work conditions she met? What was her response to this?" and "Does the author's experience make you think over some beliefs you had about occupations in this category? Discuss some of these."

(There were 13 students in class on the day observed; the teacher said there are usually 18 students. The small groups formed easily, since students had been at the program for several weeks and were comfortable with each other. However, there were two lower-level students who worked together and appeared uneasy about joining the others; the

teacher expressed concern about not having enough time to work with them.)

The teacher walked around to each of the groups, facilitating the discussion by listening to the conversations and posing questions about the reading. After a short time, she announced that the whole class would discuss the questions from the list and asked for volunteers. When a student responded to a question, the teacher used her answer as a springboard to engage the entire class in discussion, asking if the rest of the class agreed. In discussing their thoughts on the questions, some students incorporated the vocabulary words from the lists, without any prompting from the teacher.

The questions on the reading generated discussion about work in general and about students' opinions about non-traditional jobs. A student noted that the protagonist's motivation to take the job grew out of the urgent need to provide for her family. Other students pointed out that the author started at the bottom but worked her way up to become a supervisor. The teacher took this as an opportunity to say that, like the author of the story, those who want a job have to start at the bottom. She also related the comment back to some students' complaints about their worksites, emphasizing that, despite their grievances, they were gaining valuable experience. The teacher's comment led to a discussion among the students, with some seeming to agree with her point of view.

For homework, the students were asked to write their responses to the first six questions, which they had just discussed in class. The teacher told the students that the next day, they would write an essay in class about one of four quotes from the story.

Responsiveness to Students' Interests and Backgrounds. In response to questions on the teacher survey, almost all the teachers said that students in their classes helped to shape the course of study, and that students had a considerable choice of activities and materials on a day-to-day basis. Teachers strive to be flexible and to adapt lesson plans to students' interests (e.g., by reading newspaper articles on issues of interest).

Teachers also seek materials that connect with students' backgrounds. For example, during Black History Month many classes read "And Still I Rise," a poem by Maya Angelou, as well as other books and articles about people of color. One teacher noted that many of his students responded strongly to a short book about battered women, which resonated to the previous experiences of a number of students. He commented that learning to deal with issues of anger and self-control that arise from being the victim of abuse is essential to being able to get and keep a job.

Building Self-Esteem and a Supportive Atmosphere. Teachers are encouraging to students, emphasizing their talents and abilities and their capacity to learn. The approach of a GED instructor is

typical of the instructors' concern with building students' sense of themselves as worthwhile, competent people:

> Eight new students joined the class on the day the observation was conducted. The teacher asked each to introduce herself, and each one was applauded by the other students.
>
> The teacher then told the newcomers, "The most important thing I can tell you is, 'Relax.' Your classmates will help you. Don't be afraid to make mistakes–it's good to make mistakes, because that's how we learn. I have only one expectation: hold a high level of respect for each other. We don't say, 'Shut up' or 'Be quiet' to each other–everyone gets a chance to speak."
>
> Later in the class, the teacher said, "We all have certain talents. Our task is to discover and develop them.... Once we're aware of our selves and our talents, doors open to us. Some people are talented in areas they aren't even aware of yet. I suspect that most of you have talents, and I want to hear about this from you–maybe in essay form" (whereupon the students groaned good-naturedly).

Staff members strive to treat students with courtesy and respect, not only to model proper school and workplace behavior but also to demonstrate the staff members' belief that the students are indeed worthy of respect.

Variety in Materials and Approaches. The classes enroll students whose academic skill levels vary considerably at program entry (with reading levels ranging from the 4th to 8th grades), challenging teachers to develop activities that will be enjoyable and appropriate for both lower- and higher-functioning students.

Teachers use a wide variety of literacy materials, ranging from novels to job application forms. All the nine teachers surveyed said they used novels or short stories, teacher-developed materials, materials about the students' community, computers, audio-visual aids, and work-related documents; most also said they used published textbooks and workbooks, newspapers, and magazines. Each teacher is given $700 a year for books and materials, and the majority of teachers say that they always select their own materials. The program usually purchases one copy of a text, so teachers make copies of the materials they wish to use. Books about working figure prominently in their choices; these include such titles as *Do What You Want and the Money Will Follow*, *Careers Without College*, and *Zen and the Art of Making a Living*. All the teachers also use the students' writing as shared learning material. For example, students in the child care class wrote a two-page description of their own worksites and then read other students' reports and noted the positive and negative aspects of each.

Teachers also draw on community resources, such as the public library (to which classes often make field trips) and guest speakers on particular topics of interest. For example, a health care professional came to talk with students about careers as home health aides.

Teachers use varied instructional techniques in their classes. They report that small-group, whole-class, and peer teaching (in which students help each other) are the most commonly used approaches; individualized instruction is used to a lesser extent. When students are working on individualized activities, the teachers circulate around the room to assist those with questions or to discuss students' work with them.

All of the teachers assign homework.[34] The amount varies by the teacher, with five of the nine reporting that they assign two to three hours of homework per week, two saying that they give four to five hours, and two that they give six or more hours.

C. Monitoring Attendance

Students are required to attend 80 percent of the time; however, absences that are valid excuses and can be documented (e.g., from the doctor, the welfare worker, or the court) do not count against this standard. (Thus, for example, a student who was out twice in two weeks, one day with a note and one day without, would be counted as having attended 90 percent of the time, although two days' transportation would be subtracted from her subsequent transportation allowance.) During a two-week target period in May 1994, 71 percent of the students achieved this 80 percent standard.

Attendance is taken daily through sign-in sheets in the classrooms. During the weeks at the worksite, the student's supervisor signs forms attesting to her attendance. Teachers submit a biweekly attendance roster to the CSRs; this is the occasion for a teacher-CSR meeting to discuss problem students and excessive absenteeism, whether excused or unexcused. The CSRs then submit the rosters to the central OES office which issues training-related expense payments.

While the program's funding is not dependent on average daily attendance, absenteeism is taken seriously and followed up promptly. If a student is out for two days without having contacted the program, someone from the program will contact her. Teachers prefer to deal with this in different ways: some contact the student themselves; some leave it to the CSR; and some ask a clerical worker

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[34]This may be especially important to ensuring continuity of learning during the weeks that students are at their worksites rather than in class.

to make the contact. Failure to return to the program within two days results in the sending of a letter advising the student of excessive absence and giving her five days to respond. Continued noncompliance sets in motion the conciliation process, which can lead to termination from the program and a sanction.

Data on the extent of actual sanctioning are not readily available.[35] It appears that while many cases enter the conciliation process, sanctioning is used as a last resort. Any time a student expresses willingness to comply, the conciliation process is halted, and if a client indicates that she has personal or family problems that are leading to absenteeism (e.g., a truant or delinquent teenager), her CSR is likely to grant her a deferral of up to six months to deal with the situational crisis. The CSR may also try to find another activity for which the client is better suited. Sanctions are invoked primarily against students who simply do not reply to calls, messages, or warning letters.

D. Assessing Progress

Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to assess students' progress. In the work/study class, the emphasis is decidedly on qualitative methods; the most commonly used assessment technique cited by the teachers is observation, followed by student self-assessment, portfolios of student work, and tests or quizzes (e.g., spelling tests).[36]

The program is in the process of developing portfolio assessment more fully. Two teachers attended a 30-hour course sponsored by CUNY on adult learning and assessment, during which they learned about portfolios by creating their own portfolios.[37] They then presented what they had learned to the other teachers during a week-long staff development session on portfolio assessment.

Currently, some of the teachers have implemented portfolio assessment in their classrooms.[38]

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[35]The count presented in the BEGIN Program's monthly statistical report is of individuals who have been terminated from the program for noncompliance and are in conciliation. However, the imposition of a sanction is a function of the income support offices, not of OES.

[36]No data are yet available on the relative effectiveness of the different occupational clusters. In the GED classes, as discussed below, the GED predictor test is administered every month to determine students' readiness for the exam.

[37]The two teachers wrote about various issues regarding the BEGIN program. They then made revisions to their efforts in response to their own critique and the suggestions of others and responded to a "cover page" of questions about each piece of writing included in the portfolio (why it was selected, what was learned in writing the particular piece, and what progress the piece demonstrated).

[38]The contents of a student portfolio in one such teacher's class included: the student's cover letter and resume, a speech she had given at a Recognition Day ceremony, an essay about a childhood experience when she was punished, an essay on Richard Wright's mother, a letter to Dr. Spock in response to essays he had

(continued...)

Others have not, although they continue to talk about it and to share ideas. Some teachers express confusion about the mechanics of how and when to use it, as well as about the type of portfolio that is appropriate for this kind of program (especially, how the information contained in the portfolio would provide a prospective employer with persuasive evidence of the applicant's skills).

The TABE, administered during O & A, is also given as a posttest before students move into next-step activities. Neither HRA nor any other outside organization requires the program to report posttest scores; as the former BEGIN Director of Education explains, the program is intended to help people get and keep jobs, and there is no documented relationship between TABE score and work placement or persistence. However, many next-step education and training programs use the TABE results to determine whether the student qualifies for admission.

Finally, HRA asked the BEGIN education programs to complete a work readiness skills assessment for their enrollees, evaluating students on their attendance, punctuality, social interaction skills, and academic skills.[39] These measures were intended to take into account both academic progress and progress in meeting the goals of the students' Employment Development Plans. Of the 1,570 work/study and GED students seen by the Brooklyn College program between July 1, 1993 and June 30, 1994, 16 percent were judged to have made "outstanding" progress, 33 percent to have made "satisfactory" progress, 26 percent to have made "some" progress, and 25 percent to have made "little" progress.

E. Moving On

From the beginning of a student's stay, the program is concerned with her transition from education to a next-step activity. For students in GED classes at the Brooklyn College program, this transition is fairly straightforward. Students take the GED predictor test once a month; those who pass it are encouraged (but not required) to take the GED test before the course's 13-week time limit has elapsed.[40] Unless they have a specific training program in mind, students who have taken the GED test

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[38](...continued)
written on children, an essay about mothers on public assistance, and extra work she had done on her own.

[39]In asking the programs to implement this assessment last year, HRA left it to the individual sites to operationalize these concepts; this year, however, all sites will use the same operational definitions.

[40]However, the GED instructors note that because the GED classes have lowered their admissions requirements and now permit students reading below a 9th-grade level to enroll, more students require the extra four weeks of instruction than was formerly the case.

but not yet gotten their scores are virtually automatically assigned to the BEGIN internship program, which involves 13 weeks of close to full-time work experience with a city agency or nonprofit organization and is designed to help students develop work skills consistent with their occupational goals. (Students who fail the test but displayed good attendance in the GED classes and achieved high scores on the GED predictor test may return to class for an additional four weeks.)

Students in the work/study classes have a wider range of next-step options that include job club, training, and further education; although they are required to engage in some work-related activity, they are allowed their choice of activity at this stage as well. Among 137 Brooklyn work/study students who moved on to a next-step activity between July 1, 1994 and January 17, 1995, job club was the choice of 14 (10 percent).[41] Fifty-nine students (43 percent of all moving on to a next step) enrolled in non-OES-managed training programs, while 22 students (16 percent) entered a personal care training program sponsored by the Department for the Aging in conjunction with OES.[42] Finally, 42 students (31 percent) entered non-OES education programs offering ABE instruction, sometimes in combination with GED preparation.

Students in the work/study classes, like those in the GED classes, are encouraged to leave the class before the 20 weeks are up, if employment or training opportunities present themselves. (In fact, one instructor told the researchers it was better if students did leave early, so that they would not be "pushed out" at the end.) The effects of this policy on the work/study classes are equivocal, however. Students are sometimes taken out of class to hear presentations on training programs that are about to start up, and classes are interrupted by announcements about jobs. Furthermore, attrition from the classes as students enter jobs or other programs, combined with the normal degree of absenteeism, means that, especially over time, class size is reduced below the average daily attendance of 15 to 20 specified in the MOU with HRA. During the 1993-94 fiscal year, attrition and absenteeism together resulted in an average daily attendance of only 12 in the basic education classes; it also meant that students were in class for only 68 percent of the hours they might have attended. Whether or not the cohort approach that is important to building class cohesion can be preserved in the face of attendance shortfalls is an

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[41]This is substantially lower than the percentage referred to job club by the other BEGIN work/study programs.

[42]This program is regarded as a valuable program resource because it is willing to accept students with very low skills.

issue that the program may need to renegotiate with HRA.[43]

At this point it is too early to assess the success of the occupational cluster model in achieving targeted employment and next-step outcomes. In the 1993-94 fiscal year, the program slightly exceeded its target of 5 percent employment placements, achieving a 6 percent placement record, but the program placed only 10 percent of the students in next-step activities–a fraction of the 50 percent goal. In part, the problem was one of inadequate staffing (the program had only two CSRs), a situation that has been corrected with the hiring of two additional CSRs. Too, according to some informants, students were often reluctant to leave the program and would not show up for meetings with CSRs at which next steps were to be discussed, while CSRs were not proactive enough in scheduling meetings with students and "too benign" in retaining a substantial number of clients on their roster who had exceed the 20-week time limit. One observer believed, too, that the change to the occupational cluster model had been all-consuming for staff and had drawn their attention away from the next-step goal.

Under a directive from the central OES office, Brooklyn work/study program staff members devoted much more time and energy to securing next-step placements. As of the end of FY 1995, it had placed 36 percent of its students in next-step activities - a notable improvement but still below the 50 percent goal.

The shortfall partly reflects systemic issues with respect to reporting and scheduling. Students are not counted as enrolled in training until OES receives notification of such enrollment from the training provider, and there are sometimes delays in receiving this notification. Moreover, training programs often enroll people only at fixed times that do not coincide with BEGIN students' readiness to enter them,[44] while education programs often have lengthy waiting lists.

However, it is also possible to question the realism of the goal itself, an issue taken up in the last section of the paper.

V. Students' Views of the Program

The students with whom the researchers spoke were very positive about their experiences in the

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[43]One possibility might be to combine cohorts after 2 ½ months, thereby freeing up teachers to start new cohorts.

[44]One CSR commented that under these circumstances, she strongly urges students to enroll in job club, both to keep busy and engaged and because they will learn useful job-seeking skills that they can apply at a later point, when they have completed training and are ready to look for work.

Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program. Of course, these comments may be subject to selection bias: those students who are in class on any given day may view the program in a more favorable light than those who are absent. Nonetheless, there is reason to think that the program is making a positive difference in the lives of its participants.

Program staff administered a confidential survey to some 140 students who attended class during two weeks of February 1994; most of the students had been enrolled for several weeks. The survey asked the students to rate many aspects of their classes and of their own behavior. Seventy percent or more of the enrollees said that their class "always": taught the kind of material they felt they needed to achieve their career goals; was interesting and stimulating and held their attention; moved at a good speed; and helped them to enjoy learning. Equally large percentages of students reported that they "always": were eager to go to their class in the morning; felt that they were an important part of the class; liked their classmates and enjoyed their companionship; could see their improvement since the class began; felt that they were putting their best work into the class; and attended class regularly.[45]

Along with performing the ratings, students were invited to write their thoughts about the class. Although most did not write additional comments, the majority of comments received were extremely positive. Many students, however, felt that five months was not long enough to benefit from the instruction. One student wrote, "I wish I could come every week instead of every other week. I would learn more."

Most of the students felt that the program was helpful in building their confidence and self-esteem. Wrote one student:

> Coming to this school helps a lot to motivate me to get my GED and a job so I can get off Public Assistance. I would rather have a job than to be on it. I want to help myself.

And another:

> This class has really help me a lot. It has brought me out of my low esteem and made me feel like I am somebody. Thanks to [teacher's name].

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[45]The validity of the survey findings may be strengthened by the fact that students were not glowingly positive about all aspects of the class. Only 48 percent reported that the class always helped them at their worksites and 23 percent could not say; similarly, while 63 percent believed that they would come to the class even if they didn't have to, 18 percent could not say.

VI. The Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program in Perspective

In serving as a "vestibule program"--a point of entry into BEGIN--the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program has been successful in many respects. The program employs able, dedicated teachers and other staff members who have in most cases been able not only to overcome initial student resistance to participation in a mandatory program but also to establish warm, supportive relationships with students and to create an atmosphere of mutual trust in their classrooms. Teachers have exhibited considerable resourcefulness and creativity in designing curricula that expose students to the world of work through a focus on occupational areas that broadly match students' own vocational preferences; and teachers feel that their initiative is strongly supported by program administrators. (Indeed, staff development has been a priority at all levels of the BEGIN administration.) Students seem to emerge from the program with a greater commitment to furthering their progress toward self-sufficiency and a greater belief that they can succeed in this effort.

The main area in which the program has fallen short of its goals has been that of next-step placements. The discussion in Section IV suggested a number of possible explanations for the gap between objectives and actual accomplishments: inadequate staffing; students' reluctance to leave a setting in which they feel comfortable and cared about; CSRs' reluctance to "push" students too strongly; data reporting delays; and delay between the end of a student's stay in the work/study program and start-up of her next-step activity. These explanations all relate either to remediable problems of program implementation or to systemic problems over which the program has no control; they are not problems intrinsic to the program model.

But it may also be that the model itself is not conducive to next-step placements, especially in GED or training programs, because the amount of instruction students receive during their ten weeks in the classroom is insufficient to raise their academic skills to a level that would permit entry into such programs. The fact that all the BEGIN work/study programs in the city have fallen far short of their placement goals lends weight to this possibility. Many skills training programs in New York City operate under performance-based requirements whereby they are paid only for successful job placements; they therefore will not consider students who read below the sixth-grade level and, as a matter of practice, often admit only those who achieve a minimum score of 8.0 on Level D of the TABE reading test. Unless they contain a pre-GED (i.e., ABE) component, GED programs, too, often accept only students who read at the 8th grade level. Many Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program students

enter with reading scores below the 6.0-grade level, and there is little evidence to suggest that many of these students will be able to achieve an 8.0-reading level in so little time, although how much more time they would need to do so is uncertain.[46]

If the amount of instruction the work/study program students receive is too limited to permit large TABE score increases, a further problem may be that the TABE is a blunt instrument for measuring students' literacy gains, especially because the contextualized literacy skills taught in the work/study classrooms may not be captured in the TABE's items. The TABE taps general knowledge of vocabulary, not vocabulary specifically tied to work-related applications. The reading comprehension skills measured on the TABE, which center on recognizing the main idea of a passage and drawing conclusions and inferences, do not necessarily reflect the reading-for-understanding activities that take place in work-study classes.

The Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program could come closer to meeting its next-step goals by sending more students to job club, which does not impose stringent literacy requirements. However, many if not most students say they do not feel ready to look for work when they leave the work/study program–they want more education or training first–and it appears that CSRs at the site (and perhaps other staff members as well) do not make concerted efforts to steer students toward immediate

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[46]The Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program provided TABE posttest scores on 14 enrollees who completed the nontraditional/exploratory class in March 1995. While most appeared to have achieved increases in their level of literacy during their stay in the program, only three of the 14 scored at the 8.0 level or above on the posttest.

Data from the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs (NEAEP), while not necessarily representative of adult education students nationally, indicate that the number of hours of instruction clients receive is not necessarily a predictor of literacy outcomes; there was a positive relationship between hours of instruction and literacy gains for ESL clients, but not for clients enrolled in ABE or Adult Secondary Education (i.e., high school diploma or GED classes). (See Development Associates, 1994.)

The results of the study indicate that ABE students in the NEAEP sample received a mean of 84 hours of instruction between pretest and posttest and attended classes for an average of 15 weeks; the average ABE student gained 15 scale score points on the TABE reading comprehension test. The reading ability of ABE students in the evaluation at the beginning of instruction was equivalent to that of the typical 6th-grader; their improvement in reading comprehension was equivalent to what the typical American 6th-grader would accomplish in eight months of instruction during the course of a school year.

It is obviously problematic to extrapolate from these data to the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program, although it is worth noting that a student who remained in the program for the full 20 weeks and met the 80 percent attendance requirement would receive 140 hours of instruction, including instruction in math (17.5 hours of instruction per week X 10 weeks of classes X .8).

employment.[47]

As for work/study clients who want more education but who do not score high enough on the TABE posttest to enter the on-site GED program or skills training, CSRs have, and use, the option of assigning them to ABE and pre-GED programs in the community as a next-step activity. The paradox is that these programs are likely to be both less intensive (often occupying 12 hours a week or less) and less work-focused than the work/study classes themselves. The CSR Site Supervisor explains this situation by noting that there are few intensive ABE programs available and that a relatively low level of participation in education is preferable to no participation at all. Nonetheless, if the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program tries to send a strong message to clients to work hard and take full advantage of the program's time-limited opportunity to advance educationally, that message may well be eroded in the less intensive next-step education programs in which some clients enroll.

Indeed, the problem of next-step goals reflects the tensions that arise when a program is seeking to do many things at once. The Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program is subject to many different pressures and seeks simultaneously to accomplish many different objectives. These pressures and objectives–most of which are shared by the BEGIN Program as a whole, and some of which are generic to welfare-to-work programs–include:

- responding to the large and constant influx of new mandatory cases;
- offering clients a slot in the program with minimal delay;
- conducting an assessment of clients' skills levels (to compensate for the lack of assessment conducted at intake);
- preserving the worksite component as an integral part of the work/study program;
- maintaining the occupational cluster structure of classes;
- providing clients with a strong motivational experience;
- increasing clients' academic and work readiness skills;
- moving AFDC recipients into work, in order to reduce welfare caseloads and costs;
- moving clients who leave the program into next-step activities that will further prepare them for work;

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[47]Indeed, program staff members have an incentive to work with job-ready students themselves rather than refer such students to job club, in order to fulfill the 10 percent placement requirement.

- ensuring that these next-step activities will be rigorous and intensive;
- allowing clients as strong a voice as possible in the selection of a next-step activity; and
- maintaining average daily attendance at the level prescribed in the site's MOU with HRA.

The Assistant Deputy Commissioner of HRA, who directs OES, cites another managerial objective:

- allowing individual work/study programs a considerable degree of autonomy in decision-making, and avoiding the imposition of top-down solutions.

As in any system marked by such diverse goals, it appears inevitable that some of them will conflict with each other, preventing maximization of any single objective. Under such circumstances, it may be useful to rethink whether all objectives are equally important, or some objectives are more important than others, or some should be sacrificed in the interest of others. Different program design decisions than have been made to date might make for greater success in attaining specific goals.

For example, BEGIN might choose to place greater stress on clients' acquisition of academic skills in the work/study classes, so that clients will be better prepared to move on to skills training or other intensive next-step activities. If this is the case, then extension of the 20-week limit on the work/study classes is likely to be desirable; it may also be important to consider whether the worksite component could be integrated with the academic classes in a way that would reduce learning loss during the "off-weeks." (One possibility might be to alternate three days in the classroom with two at the worksite each week for lower-skilled students and two days in the classroom with three at the worksite for those with stronger skills[48]; another might be to offer the worksite component at the end of the classroom component.)

As another example, BEGIN might choose to emphasize immediate entry into employment as its most important aim. If this were the case, then a program model that requires all employable welfare recipients to engage in job club as a first-step activity, with longer-term education an option for those who are unsuccessful in this component, might make sense.[49] Alternatively or in addition, clients who complete the work/study classes might automatically be assigned to job club (which might be conducted

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[48]It is worth noting that BEGIN work/study programs initially scheduled three days at the worksite and two in the classroom each week, but instructional staff found this arrangement very disruptive.

[49]This is the model adopted by the Saturation Work Initiative Model (SWIM), which operated in San Diego during the mid-1980s and which produced both gains in employment and earnings and sustained reductions in welfare payments to AFDC registrants that were sustained for three to four years. See Friedlander and Hamilton, 1989. It is also the model initially implemented by BEGIN for all clients who had child care available.

by the site's job developers). A further advantage of this approach is that it may impress on recipients that AFDC cannot be regarded as a long-term source of income, and that employment, not just additional education and training, should be the primary goal. A program model of this sort would, however, inevitably compromise the principle of client choice that now governs BEGIN. And it might preclude GED earners from entering skills training and thereby possibly improving their long-term earnings prospects.

These choices need not be posed as stark alternatives to each other. Job club could be a mandatory activity for all clients. On the other hand, the work/study classes could be of longer duration for those who need more time in the program. In either case, however, additional resources might well have to be allocated to BEGIN, either to operate more job clubs or to expand work/study classroom capacity. Whatever their goals, programs must have the means to accomplish them.

The Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program, like the larger BEGIN program, has evolved and changed over time and is likely to continue to do so. It is to be hoped that the lessons that have been learned and the successful approaches that have been developed through the expenditure of much staff time and effort will be incorporated into any new form the program may take.

APPENDIX A

DEALING WITH MULTIPLE LEVELS OF LITERACY IN THE CLASSROOM: THE CASE OF THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE CHILD CARE PROVIDER PROGRAM

A common challenge facing instructors in adult education programs is to design lessons and activities that can be understood by and benefit students who vary greatly in reading and writing ability. This is an issue for teachers in the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program, whose students read between the fourth and eighth grade levels upon entry. The disparity is even greater among students in the Brooklyn College Child Care Provider Program, another program for AFDC recipients operated by the Brooklyn College Division of Adult and Continuing Education and funded by the New York State Education Department under its EDGE program. This appendix briefly describes that program and the techniques it has found useful in meeting the challenge of serving enrollees with very different levels of academic skills.

The Child Care Provider Program, begun in 1993 and serving about 85 students a year, grew out of a perceived need for high-quality family day care (i.e., day care offered in the provider's home) and from the welfare recipients' expressed interests. Its purpose is to empower women on public assistance to move toward economic independence while helping to fill the gap of needed services in their communities. The program prepares students to become "registered day care providers" with New York State; this status allows them to care for children in their homes or to become teaching assistants at a child care center.

The Child Care Provider Program differs from many other training programs in not requiring intermediate-level (e.g., eighth-grade) reading ability as a condition of acceptance to the program. The admission criteria for those interested in becoming family day care providers are: receipt of public assistance, an ability to read at some level, a strong desire to care for children, good health, and no criminal record or a criminal record that does not include child abuse or other offenses that would preclude licensure as a child care provider. (However, because the state in most cases requires employees of licensed day care centers to have a high school diploma or GED, program applicants expressly interested in working in child care centers usually must have one of these credentials, although occasional exceptions are sometimes made.) While students in the Child Care Provider Program do not take a reading test as part of program orientation, the project director notes that some entering students

read at only the second- or third-grade level, while others have completed an associate's degree. This appendix briefly examines the ways in which program staff have shaped the curriculum and delivered instruction to respond to this variety in students' educational achievement. Students attend classes scheduled for 20 hours a week, and the program is 20 weeks in length. Like students in the BEGIN work/study program, students in the Child Care Provider Program alternate one week in the classroom with one week at a child care center worksite. These worksites are carefully selected by the program to provide good learning settings for students; they include public and private facilities and day care centers in hospitals, schools, and corporations.

In the past, there have been two full-time teachers, one specializing in literacy and the other in child development. (The staff also includes a full-time counselor, who helps students deal with current problems and continues to assist them even after they have left the program.) The literacy instructor recently left, and the program is seeking to replace her with a part-time instructor. Despite the term "literacy instructor," improving students' literacy skills is not an explicit aim of the program–the principal objective is for students to find jobs in child care centers and as family care providers–and students are not tested on reading gains.

The two instructors have developed and implemented a curriculum that addresses the subjects covered in the New York State application to become a registered child care provider and that plays to the two instructors' respective strengths. The early childhood instructor is responsible for such topics as child development, guidance and discipline, environmental design, developmentally appropriate curriculum and routines, and issues related to child abuse. The literacy instructor takes primary responsibility for the business curriculum, health and safety, and issues of stress and burnout and oversees and ensures the completion of the application packet for state registration as a licensed provider. Some areas are given attention by both instructors, with each focusing on particular aspects. For example, in the area of communication with the parents of the children in care, the early childhood instructor handles issues related to interpersonal dynamics and communication, while the literacy instructor focuses on issues related to policy statements, contracts, and fees. Finally, specialists provide additional training for special certification in areas such as Infant/Child CPR.

In serving enrollees with very different skill levels, the Child Care Provider Program has found the following strategies particularly effective:

- **Providing information in a variety of ways.**

Teachers are aware that their students have very different learning styles, with some learning best through visual means, others by reading, still others by listening to and participating in discussions. Each topic that is addressed is therefore covered in several ways, including videos, small-group discussions, and optional reading assignments that supplement a text used by all students.

- **Having students keep journals in which they record their thoughts and observations, to which teachers respond.**

The journals contain students' reflections on both their classes and their worksites. Students are asked to write on the theme, "I used to think ... but now I know...," a topic that invites them to examine their previous assumptions and the ways in which their ideas have changed in the light of new knowledge and understandings. Teachers read the journals and respond to students' entries.

- **Encouraging collaborative learning.**

Students are told at the outset that "there is no such thing as cheating here"; working with and learning from peers is strongly encouraged by the teachers, who view collaboration as the normal mode of procedure in most workplaces and seek to model it in their classrooms. In small-group and other activities, students circulate around the classroom, observing what others are doing and gaining ideas they can incorporate in their own work.

- **Students demonstrate learning through hands-on projects that can be successfully completed in several different ways.**

Each topic covered in the class is associated with 1-3 projects that demonstrate students' mastery of the material. For example, in discussing appropriate activities for children, students make an activity file that includes 25 activities for toddlers or preschool children. Each project contains specific instructions; for the activity file project, e.g., students are told that the activities must be things that children can do independently and in their own way; the activities must include 5 activities each related to art, math, music/movement/finger play, science, and social studies; and each activity must be written on an index card that notes the name of the activity, the age of children for whom it is appropriate, the materials needed, how to set up the activity, and three things a child might learn from the activity. One of the most elaborate projects is a three-dimensional model of a child care setting that includes several types of learning centers, such as an art area, a quiet area, a puzzles and games area, a dramatic play

area, and an area for playing with building blocks.

- **Each project is evaluated on the basis of its adherence to the instructions and according to the teacher's judgment of the student's ability.**

Each project is given a grade of 1 to 5. The teacher takes into account the degree to which the project meets the guidelines and also whether, in her judgment, the student has performed it to the best of her ability. The emphasis is on the process, not just the final result. Students are encouraged to revise their projects and resubmit them if they wish.

In short, the class is structured so that all students, regardless of skill level, have an opportunity to experience repeated success.

CHAPTER 4

PHILADELPHIA'S COMMUNITY WOMEN'S EDUCATION PROJECT

I. Introduction

In reviewing the record of the Community Women's Education Project (CWEP), a community-based organization in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania that has operated education programs for economically disadvantaged women since 1977, three facts are particularly striking. First, both CWEP's expressed philosophy and its educational practice reflect a consistent set of beliefs about the purpose of education for disadvantaged women–a set of beliefs that emphasizes constant questioning of existing political and social conditions.[1] Second, despite this "oppositionist" ideology, CWEP has been able to work successfully within the JOBS system–or more precisely, within the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) system, since in Philadelphia, as throughout Pennsylvania, the local Private Industry Council (PIC), which dispenses JTPA funds, has been delegated responsibility for operating JOBS by the state Department of Public Welfare.[2] Third, CWEP has ultimately been able to convince the initially resistant PIC of the validity of its approach.

Several features, taken together, distinguish CWEP from most agencies delivering adult education, whether to AFDC recipients or to a general population:

- **its clearly articulated feminist and multicultural ideology;**
- **its emphasis on empowering students politically as well as personally;**
- **its participatory and nonhierarchical approach to teaching and learning;**
- **its focus on writing as a means of expression across all aspects of the curriculum;**
- **its belief in the value of community college rather than short-term skills training programs for program graduates[3]; and**

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[1]A study that focuses on CWEP's organizational culture (McGrath and Van Buskirk, 1994) and a dissertation in progress that examines, among other things, how CWEP students and teachers negotiate the learning process (Reumann, 1995) were especially useful sources in preparing this case study.

[2]The specific state and local welfare policies and provisions described in this chapter, which were in place when the case study was carried out, are likely to change with the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

[3]As discussed below, while CWEP is philosophically committed to long-term training, the agency's ideology is tempered by realism: staff recognize that many students will opt for shorter programs and therefore work to

(continued...)

- **its strong political advocacy role.**

All staff members appear to subscribe to these central tenets and to seek to transmit a common ethos to their students as well.

CWEP operates two programs for adults:

- **Workstart** offers instruction in reading, writing, mathematics, career planning, computer literacy, and test-taking skills, along with a wide range of electives, to students who read between the fifth- and tenth-grade levels upon program entry. As discussed below, the program was expanded from one semester to two in 1994-95; as of March 31, 1995 it had enrolled 115 students during the 1994-95 academic year. (The program's four classes each contain approximately 18 students; to maintain this class size, the program over-enrolls in the expectation that some students will decide the program is not right for them or will drop out for other reasons.) The program's goal, beyond empowering students, is to increase their academic achievement and enable them to enter vocational training programs at the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) or elsewhere.

- **The College Program** offers on-site college courses taught by faculty members of CCP; students in the on-site classes (who numbered about 380 in the 1992-93 and 1993-94 academic years) receive tutoring and academic counseling to equip them to transfer to CCP's main campus.

Students in both Workstart and the College Program can receive extensive support services, including on-site child care for their children,[4] career and personal counseling, and referrals to other social service agencies.

Philadelphia's JOBS program places primary emphasis on education and training. It is worth noting that JOBS can accommodate only about a quarter of Philadelphia's AFDC recipients who meet the requirements for mandatory participation in the program. At any given time, there are some 12,000 JOBS slots available and a JOBS-mandatory population of some 49,000 AFDC recipients. This means that JOBS enrollees, while nominally "mandatory," are individuals who are disposed to receive JOBS services.

CWEP has had contracts with the PIC since 1986 (i.e., before JOBS was enacted) to enroll economically disadvantaged PIC-referred students in Workstart, and with the implementation of JOBS,

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[3](...continued)
help students make the best possible choices among these programs.

[4]The current 20-slot child care center is in the process of becoming a licensed center that, once completed, will be able to accommodate 36 children who are between six weeks and five years old.

Workstart became one of a number of PIC "feeder" programs for adult AFDC recipients.[5] These programs are geared toward upgrading the academic skills of JOBS enrollees and other disadvantaged adults with reading scores between the 5.0- and 6.9-grade levels, so that these individuals can then move on to PIC-funded vocational skills training programs or into other activities. Approximately one-quarter of all economically disadvantaged adults seen in the PIC's assessment centers are referred to the feeder programs, which account for a maximum of 20 percent of PIC annual funds for grantees providing services to disadvantaged adults.[6]

Two of the four Workstart classes are known as "PIC classes" because they enroll only students referred by the PIC, under a contract which in 1995 required CWEP to serve 81 such students over 18 months.[7] (As discussed below, most of these students are sent to the program by PIC personnel; in addition, some are "self-initiated"--that is, they have sought to enroll in Workstart on their own and are sent by CWEP staff to the PIC to be certified as meeting JOBS eligibility criteria.) The PIC provides students in these classes with attendance-based stipends of $2 an hour, up to a maximum of $50 a week, to cover transportation and lunch; funding from the county welfare department defrays the cost of child care, as well as of other items not covered by PIC monies (e.g., special clothing allowances).

Although PIC referrals are not critical to Workstart--the program had a waiting list of at least 20 students in early March, 1995, and the list is considerably longer each September--PIC money is. The PIC is CWEP's largest single funder: funding from the PIC covered 20 percent of CWEP's estimated $632,700 budget for FY 1994-95. Other sources of revenue include the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the state Department of Community Services, grants from a number of foundations and corporations, other philanthropic giving, income from rental space in the building CWEP owns and from consultant contracts, and an allocation from Women's Way (an organization that, like the United Way, receives contributions and distributes them to various agencies--in this case, agencies addressing women's issues).

As of the spring of 1995, Workstart has been in operation for more than a decade, and while the

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[5]The number of such programs has varied over time; there are now eight feeder programs for adult recipients and three for teenagers.

[6]Along with disadvantaged adults, the PIC and its contractors provide services to dislocated workers and to youths.

[7]Workstart students in the PIC and non-PIC classes tend to be quite similar in their characteristics. For example, the majority of students in the non-PIC classes also receive welfare. However, women in the non-PIC classes tend to have higher reading scores than their PIC-referred counterparts.

close relationship between ideology and practice is readily discernible, it is difficult to reconstruct the evolution of that relationship. Thus, it is not readily apparent whether, on one hand, an ideology shared by all staff members has given rise to program practices, or, on the other, practices that staff have found to be effective have been fitted under the rubric of an embracing and flexible ideology. Perhaps both characterizations have some validity. In any event, the discoveries and lessons that emerge from an examination of Workstart would appear to be relevant to a wide range of agencies delivering adult education to the disadvantaged, not just those that share CWEP's organizational philosophy.

The chapter is divided into six sections. After this introductory section, the next section discusses CWEP's history and the development of the Workstart program. Section III examines key elements of the program-the setting, schedule, students, and staff-while Section IV describes the program in operation. Section V analyzes the ways in which teachers translate the program's key elements into practice in the classroom. The final section considers the place of CWEP within Philadelphia's JOBS program.

II. CWEP's History and Educational Philosophy

A. Program Origins and Development

The Community Women's Education Project occupies the third floor of an old schoolhouse in Kensington, traditionally a white, low-income area of Philadelphia that over the past several years has experienced an influx of Hispanic residents. CWEP began in 1977 as a component of the Lutheran Settlement House, a prominent social service agency with a focus on the educational needs of women, and incorporated as an independent community-based organization in 1981. CWEP's initial objective was to facilitate college enrollment for women in the Kensington community who had never thought about college as an option. Staff of the Community College of Philadelphia offered introductory college courses to neighborhood women at the program site, and CWEP staff then helped them transfer to the main CCP campus or to other institutions.

Within a few years, however, it became clear to some members of the program's staff and Board of Directors that many women needed to bolster their basic academic skills before college could be a possibility for them. In 1984 the Workstart program was developed in response to this need. The executive director (the third in the agency's history) describes the implementation of Workstart as one of the two principal "turning-points" in the organization's history, marking CWEP's transition from a

college-oriented program to one including a strong focus on basic literacy.

The second turning-point also came in 1987, when CWEP acquired from the school district, for the sum of one dollar, an old unused brick school building. The facility required extensive-and costly-renovations, but it has strengthened the agency's identity and made it a highly visible presence in the community. Moreover, the move into a slightly different, less ethnically homogeneous neighborhood brought the potential to serve a more diversified group of students. Finally, CWEP, which occupies the building's third floor, has leased space on the other floors to other programs addressing community needs (e.g., Head Start, a teenage violence prevention agency, a parenting program). As noted above, rent revenues from these programs support a substantial part of the CWEP budget; just as important, their presence has transformed the building into a neighborhood social service center.

The Workstart program has continued to evolve over time. Originally, it operated as a one-semester (15-week) program; then, with the Workstart II model, a second semester was developed as an optional add-on. However, because so many students were remaining for the second semester, staff decided to increase Workstart to two semesters in length. The 1994-95 academic year was the first full one under the new system.

B. CWEP's Educational Philosophy

From the beginning, CWEP's staff and its board of directors have subscribed to a philosophy of education that can be characterized as **liberationist** and **feminist**.[8] CWEP's founders were strongly influenced by the work of Paolo Freire, a Brazilian educator who worked with poor peasants in the 1960s and whose book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, has had a major influence on many adult educators. Freire argued that literacy can be a powerful tool for raising political consciousness among oppressed groups if, in learning to read, students select materials that enlighten them about the power relationships that keep them subjugated and that inform the actions they need to change their status. Critical to such learning is the student's active involvement in the process and a dialogue between student and teacher about what is to be learned. The concern for finding and developing one's own "voice" finds a parallel in feminist writings and corresponds with the program founders' concern to empower women

[8]The following paragraph owes much to the description of CWEP's pedagogical approach contained in McGrath and Buskirk, 1994.

disadvantaged by sexism as well as by economic factors and by racism.

A **focus on writing** is a natural concomitant of the program's emphasis on grounding learning in students' own experiences and in helping them to find a voice. Through writing, students can explore their thoughts and feelings about events and people in their past histories and in their present-day lives, and in expressing those thoughts and feelings, they can be recognized and affirmed by their teachers and classmates. Writing, as discussed below, is a central activity not only in reading and writing classes but also in other subjects, including math.

CWEP's goals for its students are both personal and political. At the personal level, the agency's mission is not only to help students value their experience and realize their individual aspirations but also to encourage them to move beyond their immediate concerns and to think about long-term possibilities. While Workstart seeks to help students develop the educational skills they need to move into economic self-sufficiency, program staff strongly believe that long-term self-sufficiency can best be accomplished through vocational training in community college, rather than through entry into a short-term (i.e., three-month) training program. CWEP has made a forceful case with the PIC to allow more Workstart graduates to enroll in community college as an approved activity under JOBS, an aspect of the program that is discussed in Section VI of this paper.

But if CWEP advocates on behalf of its students, it also, following a Freirean approach, seeks to make them forceful political advocates on their own behalf. Staff try to convey to students the message that they have the power to make changes in themselves, their families, and their larger communities. Through its own political activity, the agency tries to model the kind of behavior in which staff hope that ultimately students themselves will engage.

III. Key Program Elements

A. Structure and Schedule

Workstart classes follow the academic calendar, beginning in September and ending in May. Because the old schoolhouse in which CWEP is located lacks air conditioning and it would be prohibitively expensive to install it, classes are not held during the summer months.

Workstart classes meet from 9:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Students usually attend two two-hour classes each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon; there are breaks of a half hour for lunch and 10-15 minutes during both the morning and the afternoon. The class schedule is more like that of

college than of high school, in that each subject is not covered each day. PIC writing and math classes each meet twice a week for two hours each time. The reading classes meet once a week for two hours, as do classes on career planning and "electives" (which, as discussed below, are more important than their name would suggest and meet every Friday afternoon). Each week, students also attend a one-hour computer class and an hour-long mandatory support group.

CWEP has modified this schedule to accommodate PIC students in three principal ways. First, because the PIC requires that "feeder" programs operate for 20 hours a week, the two PIC classes meet Monday through Friday, while the non-PIC classes meet only four days a week.[9] Second, PIC students, unlike others, take a two-hour-a-week class on test-taking skills, added to the curriculum because in order to qualify for entry into PIC-funded training programs, students must score a minimum of 7.0 on a difficult PIC-administered reading and math competency test. Third, PIC students spend two hours a week in "mini-workshops" (distinct from the electives) led both by CWEP staff and by outside speakers that cover such topics as welfare reform, nutrition, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and domestic violence.

While CWEP did not object in principle to making these changes, it took some time to figure out how the 20-hour schedule could best be put in practice. Staff favored the concept of keeping the four days of classes (thereby allowing students to use the fifth day for medical and other appointments) but realized that extending the days by an extra hour each day would make it impossible for many students to be back home when their children returned from school. Initially, the agency mixed PIC and non-PIC students in the same classes but required the PIC students to attend a fifth day; this policy created much resentment among the PIC students and led to poor attendance. Grouping PIC and non-PIC students into separate classes has proved an adequate solution to the problem; only the electives are attended by PIC and non-PIC students together.

B. The Staff

CWEP's staff numbers 14 full-time and 17 part-time members and includes an executive director, a program development coordinator, a curriculum coordinator, the teachers, three teaching assistants, counseling staff in the Student Services unit, clerical staff, child care workers, and maintenance staff.

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[9]The 20 hours include a half-hour lunch break daily; it is worth noting, however, that PIC students were frequently observed to work on their own during the breaks.

Except for the maintenance staff, all CWEP employees are female, although the program has a nondiscriminatory hiring policy.

The teachers, the curriculum coordinator, and the Student Services staff are discussed below.

The Teaching Staff. The program employs seven teachers of math and writing (and sometimes of other subjects as well) who may be thought of as "core" Workstart staff; four of the teachers teach PIC classes. Three of the four PIC teachers are African-American and one is white.[10] One teacher is between 26 and 35 years old, two between 36 and 45, and one over 45.

In hiring staff, the executive director says that she does not look for specific credentials or teaching experience. As the head of a feminist agency, she notes that it would be inappropriate to put too much stock in credentials, which do not necessarily reflect the range and depth of women's experiences. More important, in her view, are the teaching candidate's philosophical approach to instruction, prior experience working with diverse groups, and ability to be flexible, independent, and creative.

In fact, most of the current instructors did not have experience in teaching adult literacy before coming to CWEP, although three teachers had previous experience working with welfare recipients. Two of the six teachers surveyed have Master's degrees, two are working on their Master's, one has a Bachelor's degree, and one has earned some college credits.

All but one CWEP teacher work part-time and do not receive benefits. The executive director says that she would be willing to employ full-time teachers, but the teachers themselves have chosen part-time employment because of their other responsibilities. Three of the six teachers hold another part-time job (two of them as teachers) at which they spend four to ten hours per week.

All teachers are paid $25 per hour for class time, which ranges from four to 12 hours per week. The teachers are also paid for meetings and staff development activities. Regular preparation time, however, is unpaid (and the majority of teachers say they spend at least as much time preparing for classes as actually teaching them). The executive director notes that teacher salaries at CWEP are in line with those at CCP, and compensation does not seem to be a barrier to hiring good staff. Staff turnover is low; all teachers have been with the program for at least three years.

Overall, staff seem satisfied with the program and with their teaching positions. The survey administered as part of the research asked the teachers about their relationships with their fellow teachers

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[10]One of the non-PIC teachers is of Asian-American background.

and with the program's administration. All the teachers strongly agreed that they are encouraged to experiment in their teaching, that there is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff, and that they receive good advice from others when they have a teaching problem. Similarly, most teachers stated that program administrators are supportive and encouraging toward them.

Staff Development and the Role of the Curriculum Coordinator. In much the same way that students are encouraged to develop as learners, staff are helped to learn more about the teaching process and about different ways of conducting their classes through ongoing staff development efforts.

Evidence of the importance that administrators attach to staff development is the program's employment of a full-time curriculum coordinator, who conducts staff development sessions and serves as a resource for teachers on many issues, including selecting materials and dealing with students. The curriculum coordinator and the teachers meet formally approximately every six weeks for a half day to a full day at a time to discuss topics of general interest (e.g., learning differences). Separate meetings center on issues specific to each subject area. The frequency of these meetings depends on the perceived need: for example, the career planning teachers have been making many changes to the course and meet monthly to discuss their work, while other subject area teachers meet less frequently. Teachers generally report that these meetings are helpful to them.[11]

Along with group meetings, the curriculum coordinator conducts individual meetings with teachers on an as-needed basis (both at the teacher's initiative and at that of the curriculum developer) to assist them with issues in the classrooms. For instance, one recent such meeting dealt with assessment and how to use portfolios with students; a second concerned a teacher's problems with a particular student.

Two CWEP teachers and the curriculum coordinator are part of a city-wide teacher research group sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania. The group, which is facilitated by the curriculum coordinator and is made up of adult literacy teachers and administrators, meets weekly to address topics of interest. These have included: the use of journals in teaching mathematics, what progress means for students and teachers, and how progress can be measured to meet the needs of students, teachers, and administrators.

The Student Services Unit. The student services unit comprises two counselors (including one who is called a "training advocate" and whose position is funded by the PIC) and two interns working on their MSW degrees. Counselors and interns deal with a wide range of student issues-including

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[11]It is also worth noting that teachers and program counselors hold formal biweekly meetings and meet informally on an as-needed basis.

financial problems, housing problems, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, depression, parenting issues, low self-esteem, and the daily stress of being poor--both in conducting individual sessions with students and in leading weekly support group meetings, discussed below. Referrals are made as well to therapists and to drug treatment centers and other helping agencies.[12] The counselors also advocate on behalf of students with other agencies (e.g., the Department of Public Aid), are responsible for helping students make the transition to post-CWEP activities, and oversee the operation of the child care center.

C. The Students

Workstart serves women from all over Philadelphia, although 30 percent of its enrollees live either in the same zip code as the program or in two adjacent areas.[13] Of the 115 students enrolled during the 1994-95 academic year as of March 31, 1995, 62 percent are black, 19 percent Hispanic, 18 percent white, and 1 percent "other." The average age of the women is 31. Forty-six percent of the students had not graduated from high school (the rest were high school graduates or held a GED but nonetheless had low reading scores), and 80 percent receive welfare.[14]

Workstart teachers rate the students as very interested in learning, willing to work hard, and eager to be in the program. Conversations with students suggest that students look upon CWEP as a place where they can focus on themselves, their goals, and how to realize them. They also view the program as an opportunity to learn and to counter the negative experiences many have previously had in high school, proprietary training institutions, or adult education classes. One student, contrasting her past educational experience with that in CWEP, commented:

> I remember going to school, and you're handed a book, and they tell you read and answer.... Here, we get to discuss stuff--why are you reading this, what am I gonna get out of this. By the time you read a book, you know more than that book. You're motivated, you're not just using the pencil to write yes or no, you're doing more than just that. The teachers here prepare you to think, think for yourself.

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[12]The program prefers that new students have been clean and sober for a year prior to entry but will admit those who have been drug- and alcohol-free for 6-8 months.

[13]The program is officially open to men and has served a handful of them over its eleven-year history.

[14]These data pertain to all Workstart students. Data are not compiled separately for the PIC and non-PIC classes.

IV. Inside the Program

A. Referral, Intake and Orientation

JOBS enrollees come to Workstart in two ways, as noted above. The majority are AFDC recipients who are JOBS-mandatory and are referred by staff at their welfare office to a PIC assessment center for literacy and math skills testing; those who score between the 5.0- and 7.0-grade levels in reading may be assigned to CWEP. If the program does not fill all its openings through PIC referrals, Workstart staff contact individuals who had previously sought admission to the program and were placed on its waiting list; such individuals are advised to go to the PIC for testing and eligibility certification.

As of this writing, PIC classes enroll new students at two points during the year, while the non-PIC classes enroll new students at six different times. Beginning in September 1995, all students will enter at one of six specified times. Workstart staff prefer more frequent enrollment dates, since fewer new students then enter the program at any one time. Staff members have found that it is more difficult to integrate larger groups of new students into existing classes and that some students form cliques according to who is "new" and who is "old."

The curriculum developer conducts orientation for new students, a process that can last up to four days, depending on the size of the group. During orientation, students receive detailed information about the program, its participatory focus, the expectations for attendance, the policy on drugs and alcohol, and what classes are like.

As part of the orientation process, each student completes a learning styles profile to ascertain the ways in which she learns best. The results of the profile, which includes questions about speaking, listening, reading, and writing styles (e.g., the speaking section of the profile asks such questions as, "Are you a comfortable talker?" "Always rather quiet?"), are shared with the student and given to the teachers as background information.[15]

Students are also tested with the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE)[16] and are asked to

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[15]Teachers say that they refer to the profiles to learn about the ways a particular student learns and to modify their methods accordingly. For example, when one student was having difficulty understanding why one fraction was larger than another, the teacher told the student that she knew the student learns visually and drew a representation of each fraction on the board, enabling the student to see the difference.

[16]The ABLE is designed to measure basic education skills of adults. There are three levels of the instrument, each with five or six sections: vocabulary, reading (including literal comprehension, inferences, and conclusions), spelling, language (i.e., grammar), number operations, and mathematical problem-solving.

(continued...)

write a paragraph about why they want to be in the program. The ABLE was selected because some of CWEP's funders (although not the PIC) require that students be tested using a standardized measure, and the ABLE, which is untimed, was judged to be the most "user-friendly" of the standardized tests.

The program has experimented with different ways of assigning students to classes. Last year, it used the results of the ABLE to place students according to skill level, but staff found that the divisions made some students feel "dumb" and reduced the sense of community. This year, the program has moved back to mixed-level classes.

B. Workstart Classes

Students attend almost all classes with the same group of peers (electives being the exception to this rule), making for a personalized setting in which students know each other well and know how to work together. Different teachers cover different subjects; this exposes each student to a variety of personalities and allows her to be known by a number of different teachers, while permitting the teachers to concentrate on their areas of specialization.

Several teachers begin the school year by asking students to define their individual and group goals.[17] The teachers then use this information to help determine the areas on which they will focus in class, as well as the areas in which particular students need specific assistance. (Thus, on the survey administered to the teachers, four of the six respondents described their approach to teaching as more student-directed than teacher-directed.) As discussed below, students are evaluated in part based on their progress toward the goals they have set for themselves, as well as goals set for the entire class.

Reading and writing are described as separate classes on the Workstart schedule, but both classes are taught by the same teacher, and the distinction is often blurred in practice. (The two classes will be combined during the 1995-96 academic year.) Reading encompasses comprehension and communication (including listening, oral reading and presentations, and debating skills). Teachers facilitate student

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[16](...continued)
The reading and math problems sections in particular relate to everyday life (e.g., the reading section includes a warranty and a business letter; the problem-solving section asks test-takers to calculate correct change and net pay after withholding). Although there is no time limit, almost all students complete each section within 20-35 minutes.

[17]A teacher notes that meeting with each student around goals and objectives gives her a way to establish rapport with the student early in the program. The teacher reports that students are generally open about what they want from the program as well as about their fears, and that these one-to-one meetings also allow students to get a better sense of who she is.

discussion by guiding the conversation without controlling it.

Classes use a variety of reading materials, including magazines, newspapers, and writings by former Workstart students. During the spring of 1995, the reading teachers were trying a new experiment: all were using the same text. One teacher had read *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros' novel about growing up in a low-income Mexican-American neighborhood, liked it very much, and suggested that it could be used for all students; her colleagues agreed. The book seemed especially suitable because its chapters are short and self-contained, its language is often poetic, its author is Latina, and it raises many themes that are relevant to CWEP students' lives. The book's themes are the subjects of discussions, essays, and quizzes; in conjunction with reading the book, too, CWEP is planning two days of workshops based on its themes (e.g., a workshop on housing issues related to the theme of "home"), with a Mexican "fiesta" to conclude the activities.

Writing is a central part of Workstart instruction; classroom time is devoted to this activity, and homework that involves writing is assigned as well. However, the goals of teachers and students in the writing classes are often quite different. In keeping with the agency's philosophical aim of assisting students to clarify their identities and recognize their strength, teachers emphasize writing as a means of self-expression. Students, in contrast, have more utilitarian aims and are preoccupied with writing mechanics (i.e., spelling, grammar, punctuation).[18] The teachers, for their part, are reluctant to have mechanics become the main focus of early drafts or journal entries, since they believe such a focus is likely to stifle the flow of ideas. Moreover, too great a concentration on grammar may cause students to undervalue their strengths as communicators. As one teacher put it, "Some students who are technically weak are wonderful writers."

Teachers have developed various approaches for dealing with this disparity in objectives. One is to engage students in examining their writing critically through the use of a self-assessment form, which the writing teachers distribute with each homework assignment. Questions and statements on the form ask students to evaluate their accomplishments with respect to both the content of the paper (e.g., "Did I make the paper interesting for someone who doesn't know me or anything about my topic?" "After reading your finished paper, what questions do you think someone reading it might still have because some important facts and/or details may have accidentally been left out?") and its mechanics

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[18]For a further discussion of the different aims of teachers and students in the writing classes, see Reumann, 1995.

(e.g., "I have proofread this paper and I'm comfortable with: punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and spelling"). The teacher reviews both the writing and the assessment sheet and then gives her own assessment of the student's work, using the same rating system. Often teachers find that students are more critical of their writing, and rate it lower, than the teachers.

As the preceding discussion suggests, teachers have also learned to treat the students' interest in mechanics as a way to motivate them to become their own proofreaders, thus enabling them to gain more control over their work. According to one teacher, a "teacher-centered class encourages sloppy writing," since the students then expect the teachers to correct their work. Teachers also say that when students proofread their writing, they tend to find the same problems with it as would the teachers.

Writing is emphasized in all classes, including those not typically thought of as requiring writing. Indeed, two of the three math teachers direct students to keep a math journal which they submit weekly and to which the teachers respond. The journal is intended to perform several functions. The first is to improve mathematical skills: as one teacher argues, students do better in math when they can conceptualize math problems in words, and the journals help them to become more verbally expressive. Second, in response to the teachers' specific request for information, the journal prompts students to think about the ways in which they use math in everyday life. Third, the journals provide feedback on students' feelings about math, on the pace of the class, and on areas in which students need more assistance. Finally, through the journals teachers can learn about, and respond to, things going on in students' lives that may be adversely affecting classroom performance. Variety in both materials and approaches characterizes Workstart classes. Although reading, writing, and math classes all use standard adult education/GED preparation workbooks (frequently those in the *Contemporary* series) for review and practice exercises, these exercises are generally used to supplement lessons the teacher has presented in another, "catchier" way. Whole-class, small-group, and individual instruction all have their place in the Workstart classrooms. (For example, during a portion of class time, a few students may work in a small group with the teacher on a topic with which they need extra help, while other students work independently.)

Along with these core academic classes, PIC students also attend classes on test-taking and career planning, as well as a weekly support group. The test-taking course both reviews the kinds of questions that appear on the PIC competency test and presents general test-taking strategies. The career planning class examines both general work-related topics (e.g., team-building, stress management, and

discrimination) and students' experiences in the labor market. Students are encouraged to talk about the positive and negative aspects of their previous jobs and the factors that in the past have prevented them from keeping jobs.

The class also affords students an opportunity to learn more about their own strengths, interests, skills, and values and about the occupations that most interest them or match their preferences. Various types of exercises and materials are used (e.g., Holland's *Self-Directed Search*) to explore these topics, with writing often incorporated into class activities; for example, in one class, students wrote about their ideal job. Students learn about available training programs, further education (i.e., GED) classes, and programs at the Community College of Philadelphia. Teachers also arrange presentations by staff and former students who are now in training or employed; occasionally, too, former students drop by and talk informally to the classes about their experiences since leaving CWEP.

The support group is mandatory for students enrolled in the PIC classes; members of each class attend this activity together. There is no single style of running the group to which the counselors and interns who serve as support group leaders adhere: some are more directive and others less so. However, all leaders tell the students that during the hour, they can talk about whatever is on their minds, whether school-related issues or domestic situations. The support group thus enables students to talk about their problems, realize that they are not alone in having these problems, and learn from other students' experiences.[19] CWEP staff view the support groups as crucial in enabling them to understand what is going on in students' lives and of keeping in touch with all students.[20] According to the leaders, student reaction to the support groups is generally positive; most say they like attending, even if they were initially skeptical about the value of the activity.

Along with the classes described above, students choose (on a space-available basis) one of four electives: the student newsletter, student leadership, parenting, and art. The electives address issues of importance to the students and provide additional vehicles for self-discovery and self-expression.

Students in the newsletter course produce a monthly newsletter. As a group, they discuss the topics they want to write about and assign responsibility for the articles. The March 1995 issue included

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[19]The director of the support services unit notes that she is "continuously amazed" by the high degree of isolation some women have experienced; the support group, she says, may be the first time that someone has listened to them and not criticized them.

[20]In addition to seeing students each week in the support groups, the counselors meet individually with each student at least once a month, and much more often when crises arise.

a summary of a workshop on domestic violence that cited students' personal experiences with this problem and provided a hotline number; an article on CWEP graduates and their future plans; a "Dear Abby" column; and weight loss tips.

In the leadership course, students learn by doing how to organize to produce institutional change. Some of their efforts center on improving the Workstart program. During one session that was observed, for instance, students talked about the need for greater access to computers and for more tutors. They also wanted the program to purchase a microwave oven; the teacher told the group that they would need to decide on the rules and regulations for using the appliance. Students also talk about larger issues that may affect them, such as PIC policies and practices and welfare reform proposals.

Students in the parenting course talk about their own experiences as parents and work together to develop strategies for dealing effectively with their children. Discipline is frequently the topic of these conversations (with staff helping students to identify and use alternatives to physical punishment). Students also discuss such matters as how to deal with stress, what their children should watch on television, and how to present sexuality to them (including how to find books on the subject in the library).

The art course allows students to express themselves in different media and offers them a chance to explore museums and other parts of the world around them.

C. Monitoring Attendance

Attendance is taken daily through sign-in sheets in the classrooms and is then reported on a weekly basis to the PIC, where the data are used to determine student stipends. The Workstart clerk collects messages from students who have called in to say they will be absent and gives them to the teachers. Students who do not attend class for three days (whether or not they have called to notify the program) are called by the attendance clerk.

After a student has been absent six times, the clerk sends her a letter alerting her that she has missed class. It also states that if the student returns to the program, she must take the letter around to all of her teachers to find out what she has missed in her classes and get brought up to date. After eight absences, a counselor meets with the student to discuss her absenteeism and explore whether a leave of absence is warranted. Teachers and counselors also discuss the student at their staff meeting. As a last-resort measure to improve attendance, the student may be asked to sign an attendance "contract" stating that she will attend regularly; the contract is then shown to all of the student's teachers.

According to PIC rules, if a student does not attend a program for ten consecutive days, she is

placed in a temporary "hold" status for a 30-day period. Should she return within the 30 days, she is taken out of the hold status; if she does not attend for 30 consecutive days, she is dropped from the program. When a student does not attend the program, she receives no stipend. The welfare agency may initiate a "conciliation" process to determine whether the student's absenteeism has a "good cause" justification, and if not, may reduce her welfare grant. However, it appears that sanctions are rarely applied when students drop out of Workstart; sanctioning is not mentioned as an issue by CWEP staff.[21]

Staff believe that the program-devised follow-up procedures help catch most students before they leave the program entirely, although some do "fall through the cracks." The curriculum coordinator estimated the 1994-95 attendance rate for the PIC Workstart classes at about 80 percent, and teachers provide similar estimates.[22]

D. Assessing Progress

As mentioned previously, the ABLE is used at intake, and it is readministered later in the program year. Average competency gains for the 1993-94 academic year, as measured by the ABLE, were 1.4 grade levels for reading comprehension and 1.6 grade levels for math (number operations and problem solving).

However, teachers rarely use standardized tests to measure student progress. Instead, the most commonly used method of tracking students' development cited by the teachers is portfolio assessment, followed by student self-assessments (discussed above) and teacher observation.

The use of portfolio assessment came about as a result of both internal staff development meetings and workshops sponsored by an outside organization (the Adult Learners Practitioners Inquiry Project). CWEP teachers were interested in this type of assessment because it is consistent with the program's emphasis on student-centered learning and self-reflection.

As portfolio assessment is currently performed, each student selects examples of her work over the course of the year and includes these in a folder as an ongoing record of her development. Most teachers meet with the student at least twice during the year to review her portfolio and discuss her

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[21]It seems unlikely that an agency whose ideology views poor women as disempowered by many social institutions, including the welfare system, would elect to become part of a JOBS program characterized by extensive sanctioning. Rather, it appears plausible that CWEP's willingness to become involved with the JOBS program has been abetted by the fact that JOBS, as implemented in Philadelphia, has made minimal use of grant reductions to penalize noncompliance.

[22]On the basis of readily available data, the researchers could not confirm this estimate; during their visit, it appeared that attendance was closer to 70-75 percent than to 80 percent.

progress. During such reviews, both teacher and student comment on what they have observed about the student's work.

While all the teachers use portfolio assessment, they do so in slightly different ways. Some teachers like to have students put as much information as possible into the portfolio folders, including first and subsequent drafts of a piece of writing. This gives students a chance to observe their progress and explain why they made certain changes to the writing. Other teachers encourage students to put in only the final copies, highlighting the finished product.

Despite the fact that teachers view portfolios as an essential part of the evaluation process and of students' development, they have two major concerns about the technique. One is the amount of time involved in reviewing portfolios with students. Because most teachers work part-time, they feel they lack sufficient time to compare students' earlier and later work as often as they would like; also, since each portfolio conference can last up to a half hour, such conferences cut into class time. Secondly, teachers question whether portfolios are transferable to the world outside of the program.

E. Moving On

Like other feeder programs in Philadelphia, Workstart is expected to meet standards defined by the PIC for moving students into next-step activities. CWEP's current contract with the PIC requires that 49 of the 81 PIC-referred students enrolled in Workstart complete the program successfully[23] and move into a PIC-approved activity. The definition of PIC-approved activity has changed over time, as discussed in the last section of the paper.

Planning for transition begins early and takes place both in classes and in individual meetings between students and the training advocate. The career planning class assists students in discovering and defining their interests and abilities. The training advocate also meets formally with each student at least once a month as well as on an as-needed basis; such meetings become more frequent as the end of the program approaches. Students who complete Workstart have a maximum of 90 days in which to enroll in a subsequent activity in order for the enrollment to be counted toward meeting the PIC standards.

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[23]CWEP considers students to have completed Workstart successfully if they receive an 80 percent score on a CWEP-designed list of competencies that the PIC has approved. These competencies include both pre-employment/work maturity skills (e.g., knowledge of the educational requirements, job outlook, and salary range of several occupations; regular attendance and punctuality; and good interpersonal relations) and basic education skills (e.g., proficiency in solving practical math problems; writing fluency; and basic computer literacy).

Staff report that nurse's aide and clerical training programs are currently especially popular with students. While they encourage students to train for nontraditional occupations, such as copy machine repair, they have found it difficult to attract many women to these fields.

Data are available on the next-step choices of 71 PIC students who enrolled in Workstart in the fall of 1992 and the spring and fall of 1993. PIC-funded training programs were the choice of 25 students (35 percent of the group). Eleven students (15 percent) entered non-PIC-funded education or training programs (including GED programs), 10 students (14 percent) enrolled in the Community College of Philadelphia, and two (3 percent) found employment. The remaining 23 students (32 percent) did not directly enter a next-step activity, for reasons such as physical or mental health problems, family emergencies, or moving.[24]

In view of CWEP's strong advocacy of longer-term training, it is worth exploring why only 14 percent of the graduates enroiled in CCP. CWEP staff offer a number of explanations. First, students referred from the PIC have often been told by PIC staff that short-term training will be the next step after they complete Workstart, and they have been told by welfare agency staff that they should not think about community college; these messages have been difficult to counter. Second, some students want a short route to employment; they cannot envision spending one or two years in education and training. Third, some students find the prospect of college attendance frightening: they have little idea of what to expect and often receive little support for this activity from family members. Fourth, PIC-funded short-term training provides participants with a stipend; students at the CCP do not receive a stipend, and the institution does not now offer on-site child care.[25] Finally, it is possible that some students who do not immediately move on to a next-step activity will enroll in college in the future. This is especially the case for students who have already participated in short-term training programs and have incurred student loans on which they have defaulted. Such students are not eligible for another student loan until they have made good-faith payments on the first loan for a six-month period.

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[24]CWEP does not have the capacity to track students systematically for an extended period after they have left the program, although occasionally, former students call, drop by, or attend activities for CWEP graduates, thereby enabling staff members to learn of their activities.

[25]Through the organizing efforts of former CWEP students who transferred to CCP, the situation with respect to day care is slated to change. Using the techniques they had learned in CWEP, the former students initiated a petition urging the college to provide child care; the petition garnered several hundred signatures and led to meetings with the CCP administration at which the students argued that child care was critical to their ability to continue attending school. The administration agreed to set up an on-site child care center in the fall of 1995.

CWEP staff have responded to these considerations in two main ways. First, they have tried to educate students about the value of attending longer-term training and to persuade students that they can succeed in a community college setting. Second, however, they have investigated shorter-term programs fully. Thus, the training advocate meets monthly with PIC staff to review training options and update a list of programs thought to be of high quality (e.g., a photocopier repair program). Along with other CWEP staff, she screens potential vocational training programs on the basis of curriculum, requirements, the skills students acquire in relation to the program's duration, and other criteria, in order to help students who are committed to short-term training make the best possible choice.

In short, when CWEP staff's goal of client empowerment conflicts with their belief in the value of longer-term training, respecting the client's preference is ultimately their most important consideration.

V. Putting the Philosophy into Action in Workstart Classes

This section draws on observations of Workstart classes to glean generalizations about how teachers' day-to-day interactions with students reflect CWEP's overall approach–education that is "participatory," "nonhierarchical," and "multicultural," and that emphasizes "both personal and political empowerment." The practices described below are not limited to programs espousing an educational philosophy similar to that of CWEP. Thus–to take the first two practices described below–in many more traditional classes, students have some role in deciding on class activities; and most adult education teachers try to select materials to which students can relate. What makes CWEP special is the extent to which the philosophy and key principles that undergird the agency shape classroom activities and permeate the classroom atmosphere.

"Participatory"

- **Workstart students decide (within limits) what will happen in their classes.**

During part of a writing class, students broke up into small groups to plan activities in which the whole class would participate over the next few months, with each group in charge of planning a day-long activity for the class. The only condition the teacher placed on the groups was that the activities they selected had to be educational in some way. She gave students the Sunday paper to use as a resource and answered their questions, but for the most part, the students were free to make decisions

on their own. One of the groups discussed an outing to see a new movie, "Losing Isaiah," whose subject is a custody battle between the black birth mother and the white adoptive mother. A student gave a brief synopsis of the movie to others in the group who hadn't seen it. Everyone in the group was interested, and they brought the idea to the teacher, who asked how they planned to make the outing educational. After a discussion with the teacher, the group decided to ask a speaker from an adoption agency to come talk about various issues associated with adoption, including the legal issues around reclaiming a child who has been placed for adoption and the question of interracial adoption posed by the film.

In a math class, the teacher asked the students if they would like to work on word problems involving percentages. Not everyone agreed that this was what they wanted to do. The teacher proposed that the students do a couple of pages of exercises in a math workbook; then they would make a decision about the next activity depending on their level of comfort with what had been done.

- **Workstart teachers use materials and examples to which students can readily relate.**

In a math class, the teacher explained the concept of decimals in terms of a sales tax. She advised the students to think about problems they didn't immediately understand in terms of concepts and operations [like calculating the amount of sales tax] with which they were familiar. Similarly, a writing teacher, reviewing the concepts of first- and third-person narratives, noted that, "'He said/she said' is a good way to remember the third person."

A math teacher taught a class about estimates, averages, and percentages by distributing little plastic bags of M & M candies to the students, asking them first to guess how many candies were in each bag and then to sort and count them according to color and calculate the percentage of each color in the bag. (She explained to the researcher that she chose this exercise because it involves tactile learning, which is helpful for many of her students–and because M & M's were on sale.)

- **Workstart teachers are willing to hear what students don't like about their schooling as well as what they are happy with.**

In the elective class that produces the CWEP newsletter, students began to talk about the next issue and how to divide up the work. A student who had been quiet through most of the class was asked by other students what part she would like to play in the next issue. The student replied that she felt "bored" and said, "I'm not really into this." She said that she had wanted to talk to the teacher in private about her concerns. The teacher did not seem at all upset or shocked by the student's negativism and

asked her to talk about her feelings. The student said that she had wanted to get into the parenting elective, since she was having difficulty managing her children, but the class was filled. Her main complaint was that this elective required writing the articles outside of class time, and she felt she didn't have the time. Another student said, "Since you're here now, why don't you participate?" and proceeded to interview the reluctant student for an article in the upcoming issue.

"Nonhierarchical"

- **Workstart teachers do not suggest that they always have the answers; they challenge students to come up with their own answers.**

In the writing class described above, once students had decided that they wanted to invite someone from an adoption agency to address the class, the students wanted to know whom they should call. The teacher turned the question around, asking the students to think about whom *they* thought they should call. She advised them to think of themselves as the teacher, having to plan the lesson for the day. After the students had discussed their plans, the teacher told them that if they selected a date, time, subject, and contact person, she would make the phone call.

In a math class, one student discovered a teacher's mistake in calculating an average; the teacher's reaction was completely non-defensive. She subsequently explained to the researcher that her mistake was deliberate, because she wanted students to use their "common-sense math skills" to realize that the average of a set of numbers could not be greater than any of the numbers. Later in the class, she made another deliberate mistake and advised the students, "Don't trust me--I told you it was a bad math day."

In another math class, the teacher gave the class a rule for figuring out what percentage a number is of another number. She then told the class, "That's how I would strongly suggest doing it, but I can't tell you that's how to do it. You have to figure out what's best for yourself."

- **Workstart students often teach one another.**

Three students who needed extra help with fractions sat down with the teacher while the other students in the math class worked individually. A student explained to the teacher how to set up the problem, and the teacher wrote what the student said on the board; the students then executed the problem. One of the students didn't understand part of the process, so the teacher explained the procedure. The student was still confused, so another student in the group again explained what had been done; this time, the student understood.

As one student put it, "It's amazing how one student could teach the other, even though the

teachers are great... 'cause a lot of times we have a better, easier way to explain to the other, so we work as groups."

"Multicultural"

- **Workstart teachers and students accept differences as well as similarities between groups and do not avoid talking about such differences.**

In a reading class, students read a chapter from *The House on Mango Street* about the narrator's neighborhood and outsiders' fears about coming into that neighborhood. The teacher, who is African-American, related the book's narrative to the uneasiness black people may have about being in the mostly white neighborhood in which CWEP is located. Students then began to talk about how African-Americans are perceived by different groups. The teacher pointed out that CWEP offers students an opportunity to interact with people of different backgrounds.

"An Emphasis on Personal Empowerment"

- **Workstart teachers constantly reassure students that they are intelligent, that they can learn, and (perhaps especially important for women) that getting the right answer is not just a matter of luck.**

A writing teacher told the students that the next time the class met, they would have a quiz on *The House on Mango Street*, to test their knowledge of the principal characters and of such concepts as narrator, point of view, location, fiction, and themes. The students clearly wanted to know what was going to be on the test-how many themes they needed to know, for instance. The teacher reassured them that they should not worry about the quiz: "Try not to let your anxiety block what you really know."

When a woman in a math class said it was "a miracle" that she got the right answer, her teacher quickly responded, "It's not a miracle."

- **Workstart students are encouraged to express ideas that may be unusual or unpopular and to know that their opinions will be respected, even when others disagree with them.**

In a writing class, students were given a homework assignment: to write their opinion on an issue and then interview ten other people about that issue. The teacher asked students to resist persuading the other people to agree with them and to try to get a cross-section of respondents (e.g., young and old). Students were excited about the work (one exclaimed, "This is great!") and began asking each other their

views. Some students picked controversial issues they had previously discussed in class--e.g., whether the death penalty should be imposed, or whether criminals should be caned. Other students picked questions such as whether the parent or child is the guilty party when the child does something wrong.

When students asked each other's opinions on the topics, some were surprised to learn that their views differed, or that some people's opinions depended on certain considerations and were not unequivocally positive or negative. Some students began to try to convince others of the rightness of their own points of view but then remembered the teacher's recommendation. The teacher later told the researcher that she uses this exercise as a way for students to appreciate different perspectives, as well as to articulate their own thoughts more clearly.

- **Workstart instructors are willing to contradict what other "authority figures" have said.**

A student in the newsletter class told the class that she would like to become a writer. Her PIC counselor had told her that she should think about a more stable career, such as that of nursing assistant. Both the teacher and her classmates encouraged the student to pursue her dream. The teacher, who is also a freelance journalist, acknowledged the difficulty of getting into the field but suggested to the student that she think about the types of articles she would like to write and where she would like her work to appear, as a way of narrowing her focus.

- **Workstart teachers give students practical strategies for dealing with the situations they face.**

In a career planning class, the teacher suggested that students make a "cram sheet" with the correct spelling of words they were likely to use in job applications. In talking about dealing with the multiple stresses of being a working parent, she spoke of the value of taking a 15-minute "time out" from one's children upon returning home at the end of a work day. She also told the students, "There will be days when you'll get really tired. Those are the days for those 99-cent pizzas on sale."

In a class on test-taking, the teacher suggested a number of measures students could take for extra energy: bring a little box of raisins, stretch, breathe deeply, eat something for breakfast, don't wear colors that depress you. She also advised the students, "When it [a test item] says, 'You may choose more than one,' you can assume there's more than one answer. That's a little clue in test-taking."

"An Emphasis on Political Empowerment"

- **Instructors help their students to understand–and respond to–complex political issues.**

A class read together a chapter from *The House on Mango Street* about a woman who has many children and whose husband has left her. This led to a discussion about parenting and the man's role in the family. One student said men are all bad; the teacher responded that while she does not believe men are all bad, society has allowed them not to take responsibility for their families. Another student asked if this was why Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich wants men to marry the mothers of their children. This was followed by a discussion of current welfare reform proposals; students were very knowledgeable about reforms being proposed by the Republican party.

Students in the leadership elective organized a letter-writing campaign to oppose the Republican welfare reform proposal before the House of Representatives. A delegation that included CWEP students demonstrated at a House Ways and Means subcommittee hearing on that proposal to protest that welfare recipients themselves had no voice in the hearing.

VI. CWEP as an Advocacy Organization

CWEP carries its educational mission far beyond the walls of the classroom. As the agency's executive director explains, part of CWEP's role as an educator is to present the perceptions and attitudes of its students, as well as its own experiences, to a wider audience, and in the process to shape public policy in a direction that is more consistent with its own beliefs and priorities.

In recent months, CWEP has undertaken a variety of public education and advocacy activities, for some of which it has received media coverage. It has worked closely with another advocacy organization, the Philadelphia Unemployment Project, and with the Mon Valley Steel Workers Project to call attention to the public's different perceptions of welfare recipients and dislocated workers (who may be close to signing up for welfare) and to the ways in which poor women are negatively affected by rules governing Unemployment Insurance. It has held a town meeting on welfare reform with the Delaware Valley Housing Coalition and provided testimony on how revisions of laws and regulations concerning the Job Training Partnership Act, adult literacy, school-to-work programs, and Carl Perkins monies will affect those on welfare.

The issue around which CWEP's information and advocacy activities have mostly centered, however, is the kind of skills training that should be available and encouraged to maximize self-sufficiency among welfare-dependent women. This issue is especially important because short-term (i.e.,

three- to six-month-long) training has been the cornerstone of PIC-approved activities for JOBS participants. Such training is in line with the PIC's traditional mission of rapid job placement (albeit for a generally less disadvantaged population than the one served by JOBS). CWEP has sharply questioned the value of short-term training programs on several grounds: the narrow range of job skills such programs often impart, their frequent failure to train students for jobs that are in demand, their tendency to train people for low-paying jobs, their lack of placement services and poor placement records, and (especially when training is provided by proprietary institutions) their practice of inducing students to apply for student loans to finance the training--loans on which the students are all too likely to default.

As noted above, CWEP strongly prefers training programs like those offered at community colleges. Such programs generally take one to two years to complete and provide training in a wider range of skills, permitting a greater degree of mobility among occupations in the same general area. However, the PIC has opposed college enrollment as a JOBS option because college classes typically occupy fewer than 20 hours a week. Until 1995, the PIC limited to 30 percent the proportion of Workstart graduates who could enroll in community college and other non-PIC-funded programs and still be counted as meeting the PIC requirement for making the transition into next-step JOBS activities.

In keeping with its role as educator and advocate, CWEP gathered and disseminated data to support its position. In the spring of 1994, staff surveyed a sample of 34 Workstart students. The findings indicate that the students were motivated to seek work and training. All but one student had been employed in the past (with the 33 students holding 106 jobs among them), and the majority (21 women) had attended at least one prior training program. Only three of the 21, however, were able to gain employment in the field for which they had been trained at wages that did not require continued supplemental welfare assistance; 13 were unable to secure employment at all in the field for which they had been trained. Seventeen women financed their training programs with student loans, of whom only one had been able to pay back the full amount of the loan.[26]

Along with these data from its own program, CWEP staff examined the JOBS regulations and investigated the policies adopted by other Pennsylvania Private Industry Councils and other states' welfare agencies regarding approved activities for JOBS clients. Staff found that community college was

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[26]It should be noted that these numbers by themselves do not speak definitively to whether short-term training is effective. "Selection bias" could be at work--i.e., the Workstart student body might comprise only the least successful enrollees in short-term training. Determining the impacts of short-term training programs would require comparing outcomes for program enrollees with those for a similar group of individuals (preferably one selected through random assignment) who did not participate in the training.

However, the numbers do make a strong prima facie case that enrollment in short-term training did little to assist a group of relatively motivated women with limited academic skills.

an approved activity in other states' JOBS plans and in other Pennsylvania jurisdictions as well. They also ascertained that the JOBS 20-hour rule refers to a per-person average calculated with respect to the scheduled hours of the entire group of individuals eligible for JOBS services, not to a requirement for each individual participant.

Armed with these findings, the CWEP executive director and others made a case that the 30 percent limit on approved placements in non-PIC programs, especially vocational training programs at CCP, should be lifted. It argued its position over the course of a year and a half in testimony regarding the master plan that the Philadelphia PIC is required to submit to the state Department of Labor, in meetings with individual PIC staff members, and ultimately, in hearings conducted by the Commerce Committee of the Philadelphia City Council on the effectiveness of PIC-funded programs.

In 1994-1995, for the first time, the PIC lifted its 30 percent limit on community college enrollment for Workstart students; for the 1995-96 academic year, students in all feeder programs will be allowed to enroll in CCP vocational programs as a JOBS activity. Thus, CWEP's long-standing belief that longer-term training is the best route to self-sufficiency for AFDC mothers will be incorporated into PIC policy.

Certainly, forces other than CWEP have been important in reshaping PIC policies. During the last couple of years, the PIC has come under fire on several grounds: the high salaries paid to its staff, potential conflicts of interest among its Board members, and its failure to conduct up-to-date labor market analyses (so that the agency continued to fund large-scale training programs in occupations for which there was no longer significant demand). Furthermore, Philadelphia has experienced significant job loss, especially in the lowest-skilled occupations. These circumstances have made for a political environment that is more receptive to hearing about the value of longer-term training programs that could produce a more skilled and more versatile workforce. Nonetheless, CWEP's well-informed and articulate staff have had an unusual influence on the PIC–abetted by the fact that Workstart has been a strong performer (with a per-student cost of $2600 very much in line with the other JOBS "feeder" programs).

CWEP's influence on the PIC is likely to continue: CWEP's executive director was recently asked by the PIC to become its Vice President of Policy and Program Development and has accepted the position, considering it an opportunity to introduce broad-scale change into Philadelphia's job training system. The appointment is strong testimony to CWEP's philosophy that the role of education–and of educators–is to change not only students' personal lives but also the political environment that can both broaden and constrain students' opportunities.

CHAPTER 5

THE PIMA COUNTY ADULT EDUCATION JOBS 20 PROGRAM

I. Introduction

Education is the remedy often prescribed to ameliorate a wide range of social ills. The director of Pima County Adult Education (PCAE), a public non-profit entity in Tucson, Arizona,[1] notes that in 1994 the agency served not only adult students enrolled in classes, voluntarily (i.e., the traditional adult student population) but also juvenile and adult offenders ordered to attend school as a condition of sentencing and emotionally disturbed adults expected to attend classes as part of their treatment plan.

Students served by PCAE also included recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) required by the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), the state agency responsible for welfare, to attend school (or to participate in other activities promoting self-sufficiency) under the JOBS Program.[2] During the July 1, 1993 - June 30, 1994 fiscal year, 2,008 individuals receiving some form of public aid (cash assistance, food stamps, or publicly funded medical care) were enrolled in PCAE classes; they comprised some 20 percent of the 10,274 students served by PCAE during the year.[3]

As a rule, the judicial, mental health, and income support systems do not provide additional financial support to adult education programs to enable them to serve these new groups of students. One exception to this generalization is the JOBS funding awarded to PCAE's JOBS 20 Program. The 204 students enrolled in JOBS 20 during FY 1993-94 constituted only 10 percent of all PCAE students on public aid and only 2 percent of the entire student body. Nonetheless, the program has an importance for PCAE that the numbers do not reflect. Because JOBS 20 is able to draw on an infusion of federal JOBS resources (allocated to DES and disbursed from that agency to the Arizona State Department of Education, Adult Education Division), the program has been able to develop a strong staff complement and introduce other innovations. Indeed, PCAE's associate director comments that JOBS 20 provides a model of how the agency would like to serve all students.

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[1]PCAE operates out of the office of the Pima County Superintendent of Schools.

[2]The specific state and local welfare policies and provisions described in this chapter, which were in place when the case study was carried out, are likely to change with the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

[3]This count includes individuals who were enrolled in PCAE classes on a voluntary basis, as well as those who were required to attend.

So called because it engages JOBS participants in education activities for 20 hours a week, the JOBS 20 Program has as of this writing been in operation for almost three and a half years,[4] during which time it has refined its procedures and expanded from one to three sites. For this year, the program has received DES funding to serve 75 students, who are referred to the program by JOBS case managers, at any given time. Sixty-five slots are for native English-speaking students in classes providing instruction in adult basic education (ABE) and preparation for the General Educational Development (GED) test, while 10 slots are for students enrolled in classes in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The 65 ABE/GED students, who generally lack a high school diploma or equivalency certificate,[5] are organized into three classes (with slot levels of 25, 20, and 20) at three different locations; each class meets the requisite 20 hours. The 10 ESOL students vary greatly in their ability to speak, write, and understand English. They therefore spend weekday mornings from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. in regular PCAE (i.e., non-JOBS 20) ESOL classes, where they are grouped by level of English language competence. Two afternoons a week, the JOBS 20 ESOL students meet as a class for an additional five hours, bringing their weekly total to 20 hours as well.

The JOBS 20 classes have a number of elements in common with other PCAE programs. These include a **student-centered approach to learning** and an **emphasis on personal and political empowerment**. However, enhanced DES funding[6] has strengthened the educational experience of JOBS 20 students and the program as a whole in a number of ways:

- It has defrayed the cost of computer labs at the three JOBS 20 sites;
- It has paid the salary of a part-time counselor/life skills instructor for JOBS 20 students;
- It has permitted the hiring of part-time classroom aides who assist the teachers with instruction and handle many clerical responsibilities;
- It has enabled the development of a computerized system for monitoring student performance on standardized tests;

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[4]The first JOBS 20 class began in January 1992.

[5]The program is aimed at AFDC recipients who do not have a high school diploma or GED; DES staff generally refer degree-holders either to job search or to a community work experience position. However, if, while they are in these activities, clients give evidence of lacking basic skills, they may be reassessed and referred to basic education.

[6]This year, the projected budget for JOBS 20, which is fully funded by DES, is $204,000 - approximately $850 per student; in FY 1993-94, the average cost per student was $903. In contrast, the PCAE director reports that average funding per non-JOBS 20 student served by the agency is $150.

- It has allowed increased time for staff development;
- It has created opportunities for celebrating students' achievements.

Another important feature of the JOBS 20 Program is the **generally cooperative (although not tension-free) relationship between JOBS 20 and DES staff**. The formal aspects of that relationship are spelled out in a document that details the responsibilities of the two parties and the nature and frequency of communications between them. Thus, for example, the interagency agreement specifies daily attendance reporting, monthly telephone contact between teachers and case managers, and quarterly meetings involving teachers, case managers, and program administrators from both PCAE and DES to review program operations and discuss policies and procedures. Teachers and case managers also take care to respect each other's spheres of authority. In particular, DES case managers defer to the teachers on educational issues, such as how long students who are attending regularly should remain in the program; there are no limits on length of stay for single parents, who can remain enrolled in JOBS 20 as long as their teacher judges that they are making good progress.[7] Teachers, for their part, encourage students to take the GED test as soon as the students' practice test results indicate that they are ready to do so. On the other hand, follow-up with students who are absent is designated as a responsibility of the DES case managers; interagency collaboration on this matter is enhanced by the fact that, as discussed below, JOBS 20 staff have a financial as well as an educational incentive to secure high attendance.

JOBS 20 does not enroll a random cross-section of the AFDC population judged to need basic education or ESOL. Although the program accepts low-level readers and therefore does not "cream" on the basis of academic ability, it accepts only those who are willing to participate in educational activities for 20 hours a week. Further, it admits only those whose support service needs have been met and who do not present readily identifiable barriers to participation (e.g., problems with health or child care).

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[7]In contrast, a stringent time limit is imposed on parents in two-parent AFDC cases: six months, starting from the month when the individual applies for assistance. Since there is usually a lengthy waiting list for entry into JOBS 20 classes, it may take several weeks for students in two-parent households to be placed in the program, further cutting into the time they can spend in classes. While the JOBS 20 teachers criticize the time limit as educationally unsound (noting that students are sometimes forced to leave just when they are ready to take the GED test), it appears that the teachers are able to live with it, especially since students - usually men - in two-parent cases rarely number more than one or two in their classrooms.

This chapter, which focuses primarily on the JOBS 20 ABE/GED classes,[8] is divided into five sections. After this introductory section, the next section discusses the history and design of the JOBS 20 Program. Section III examines key elements of the program–the setting, schedule, students, and staff–while Section IV describes the program in operation. The final section considers the place of JOBS 20 within Arizona's evolving JOBS program.

II. The Origin and Design of the JOBS 20 Program

Education has been a major component in Arizona's JOBS program since the beginning. After the passage of the Family Support Act in 1988, the Adult Education Division of the Arizona State Department of Education negotiated with DES to engage adult education agencies statewide–especially agencies already serving large numbers of welfare recipients–in delivering services to JOBS students.

PCAE and DES had developed a good interagency relationship before 1988, and it was therefore logical that PCAE would be selected as the principal provider of JOBS 20 education services in the Tucson area.[9] JOBS education programs were required to maintain their then-current levels of effort (i.e., to serve the same number of welfare recipients as before JOBS 20 was implemented). This proved to be something of a problem for PCAE because it had already, as a "favor" to DES, enrolled a large number of AFDC students in the agency's classes without receiving special reimbursement for them just before the maintenance-of-effort provisions were put into effect.

Until recently, JOBS enrollees in Arizona were required to participate in JOBS activities (i.e., job search, education, work experience, and skills training) for 20 hours a week.[10] JOBS 20 classes were especially designed to meet this requirement, since PCAE's regular ABE and GED classes operated for fewer hours. However, PCAE's associate director, who was principally responsible for developing the JOBS 20 Program, had additional reasons for wanting to develop discrete JOBS 20 classes. She felt that AFDC recipients would get "lost" in regular PCAE classes, and she wanted to create cohesive classes

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[8]Because the JOBS 20 ESOL class contains only Spanish-speaking students whose command of English varies greatly, the class is conducted mostly in Spanish, in which the teacher is completely fluent; the researcher, however, is not.

[9]A second, smaller JOBS 20 education program is operated in Tucson by the Department of Adult Probation.

[10]This requirement has been increased, as discussed below.

in which students would feel a special sense of identity. The supplemental funding for JOBS 20, she believed, would also enable PCAE to experiment in ways that would benefit the entire agency.

DES set only a few conditions for PCAE and other adult education providers. First, the JOBS 20 classes were restricted to JOBS-mandatory clients referred to the program by DES case managers; students who approached the agency on their own were not permitted to enroll in the JOBS 20 classes. Second, DES agreed to fund sites with computer learning labs at a higher rate than those without such labs and established the requirements for programs seeking designation as computer-assisted sites.

Finally, to impart a greater emphasis on vocational preparation to classes essentially oriented toward helping students acquire the academic skills needed to pass the GED test, DES required that the JOBS 20 classes incorporate one and a half hours of life skills a week, leaving it largely to PCAE to determine what these life skills should comprise. DES officials agreed that it was appropriate for life skills classes to cover a wide range of topics–including budgeting, time management, and parenting education, along with career exposure activities–on the premise that students needed skills in all these areas in order to be job-ready. However, DES has never questioned the premise that the fundamental purpose of JOBS 20 classes is instruction in basic reading and math skills and preparation for the GED test.

PCAE serves JOBS enrollees in both JOBS 20 and regular ABE/GED and ESOL classes; however, the agency receives DES funding only for JOBS 20 activities. JOBS clients who need to upgrade their skills but are unwilling to go to school for 20 hours a week may be assigned by their DES case managers to attend regular adult education classes and to fill in the remaining hours with job search or work experience. Clients who opt for JOBS 20 may also be assigned to regular classes and supplemental activities until a slot in a JOBS 20 class becomes available. In either case, case managers make efforts to assign clients to two or even three components to ensure that JOBS enrollees spend the requisite amount of time in JOBS activities.

At the beginning of 1995, DES increased the level of effort expected of JOBS participants: to prepare welfare recipients for a 35- or 40-hour work week, DES is now aiming toward a statewide average of 30 hours of engagement in JOBS activities weekly. The 30-hour-a-week participation requirement has been put into practice for Tucson students in non-JOBS 20 education classes. However, it has been the understanding of both PCAE and local JOBS office case managers that JOBS 20 students were exempt from the new requirement, and to simplify the burden of assigning and monitoring clients in multiple components, case managers have responded by trying to move students from regular

ABE/GED programs into JOBS 20.[11] This has created a long waiting list for the program (100 students waiting for slots in ABE/GED classes and 44 waiting for ESOL slots as of early April 1995).

III. Key Program Elements

A. The Setting and Structure of JOBS 20 Classes

JOBS 20 ABE/GED classes are located at three PCAE learning centers; non-JOBS 20 PCAE classes are also held at these centers. The El Pueblo and Liberty Learning Centers are situated within a short walk of each other on the south side of Tucson, the city's area of highest poverty. El Pueblo occupies space in a community center operated by the Tucson Department of Parks and Recreation, while the Liberty Learning Center is situated in a former elementary school that is part of the Sunnyside School District. (The JOBS 20 ESOL class is held at Liberty as well.) The third JOBS 20 ABE/GED class, on the west side of the city, is in a temporary building on the grounds of the El Rio Community Center, also operated by Parks and Recreation, which, along with the school district, allows PCAE to use these facilities rent-free and provides maintenance for the classrooms. The three sites were selected because of the large numbers of welfare recipients in their general locations.

While all three facilities can be reached by public transportation, students may have to wait up to an hour for a bus and transfer more than once. Many students seem to come to the program in their own cars or to get rides from friends or relatives.

Classes are held year-round, with week-long breaks before Easter and Labor Day and at the end of June and a two-week break at Christmas.[12] The Easter and Christmas break periods coincide with Tucson public school vacation periods. Although classes are not in session, teachers work through the spring and summer breaks on lesson-planning and other tasks; staff development sessions also take place during these periods. Teachers, along with students, have two weeks off at Christmas and accrue two additional weeks over the course of the year which they may take at any time; substitute teachers cover their classes.

At the beginning of the academic year, PCAE gave students in each JOBS 20 ABE/GED class

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[11]Case managers have also sought to assign clients to two regular (i.e., non-JOBS 20) PCAE ABE or GED classes at the same time.

[12]Child care is paid for during the summer for children up to age 13. DES staff report that there are enough slots in summer programs for children in the Tucson area to accommodate the children of JOBS 20 enrollees.

the authority to work out their class schedule, thereby putting the rhetoric of student empowerment into practice. In figuring out how to accommodate the 20-hour rule, students discussed what time the day should begin and end, how long lunch breaks should be, and what factors (e.g., children's school and child care schedules, the desire to keep Friday afternoons free) should be weighed. Each of the three classes has slightly different hours. At Liberty, students attend 4 1/2 hours a day Monday through Thursday (from 8:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. , with a half-hour lunch break); on Friday, the day is over at 10:30 a.m. Students at El Rio attend five hours a day Monday through Wednesday, three hours on Thursday, and two hours on Friday. The schedule at El Pueblo is most like that of a regular high school: classes from 9:30 a.m. until 2:15 p.m., with a 45-minute lunch break, Monday through Friday.

B. The Students

JOBS 20 students enrolled during the 1993-94 fiscal year were overwhelmingly female (87 percent) and predominantly Hispanic (77 percent). Sixty percent were between 25 and 44 years old, and an additional 31 percent were aged 18-24.

There is no minimum reading level that students must have attained to be admitted to the program; students with low reading ability can receive special tutoring from volunteer tutors and work individually in the computer lab.[13] On the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE),[14] which are administered to students upon entry into the program, some 57 percent of students assigned to ABE/GED classes in FY 1993-94 had reading scores between the 6.0 and 8.9 grade levels, while 37 percent read at the 9.0 grade level or above. In contrast, the majority (58 percent) of ESOL students were judged to be at the lowest level of English-language competence on the basis of an intake interview.

During her visit, the researcher met with groups of students at two of the three sites and also conversed with individual students. Virtually all the students had heard about JOBS 20 through DES, where they were told by DES case managers that they could either go to school or training or look for work. Most had worked before in such fields as assembly work, fast food restaurants, hospital housekeeping, and groundskeeping, and they felt they needed more education in order to get a better job. The majority had some idea what occupation they wanted to pursue upon leaving the JOBS 20 program,

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[13]The literacy lab at El Pueblo, attended by students both from that site and from Liberty, is equipped with the PALS (Principles of the Alphabet System) and INVEST learning programs; the former is geared specifically toward low-level readers, while the latter begins at a low level and proceeds up to the GED level. There is no corresponding facility at the El Rio center.

[14]For a description of the TABE, see Chapter 3, footnote 4.

although a not insignificant minority said that they wanted to attend Pima Community College but were unsure what they wanted to study.

Students expressed mixed feelings about the JOBS participation mandate. Some acknowledged that they had felt angry about being required to go to school, others recalled their initial anxiety, still others said they realized that sooner or later they would have to do something other than care for their children and were ready when that time arrived. In general, however, it appeared that resistance to leaving young children in the care of others was greater among students in Tucson than in the other adult education sites studied.[15]

Despite students' dislike of the mandate, teachers report that within a couple of weeks, the large majority come to enjoy going to school, and conversations with students confirm this opinion. Students reported that JOBS 20 classes were "totally different" from their earlier schooling, which most recalled without pleasure. They commented that their classes were "like a family," all of whose members were in the same situation and were in a position to encourage each other, and that they liked coming to school because there was always someone to talk to. Furthermore, students worked at their own pace or with each other, and the competitiveness they remembered from high school was gone and unlamented.

> That students regard their classroom as a "safe" and supportive environment was manifested by an incident observed by the researcher: during a class activity, a student tearfully burst out that she felt terrible about having called the police the previous evening to intervene in a family quarrel. The student was afraid that her 20-year-old brother, who has a history of violence, would injure herself, her child, and her disabled mother. The student expected that the police would only order her brother to leave the premises; instead, they arrested him. Her classmates were very supportive, reassuring her that she had done nothing wrong.

C. The Staff

The JOBS 20 staff includes the JOBS 20 coordinator (who is also the learning center coordinator at El Pueblo, where her office is located), one 30-hour-a-week clerk (also at El Pueblo), three ABE/GED teachers, one ESOL teacher (who is paid partly through JOBS 20 and partly through regular PCAE funding), six teacher aides, and a 15-hour-a-week counselor/life skills instructor (who is paid at the scale

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[15]This desire to stay at home with their children may reflect traditional Hispanic cultural norms about how and by whom young children should be cared for. Alternatively, or in addition, it may speak to the fact that in Arizona, women whose youngest child is one or older are required to participate in JOBS, whereas in the other jurisdictions studied, that mandate extends to women whose youngest child is three or older.

of the teachers). Unpaid volunteer tutors also work with students.

Teachers. Teachers are selected through an unusually egalitarian process in which a JOBS student and a support staff worker (e.g., an instructional or clerical aide) always join professional staff on the hiring committee. According to the associate director of PCAE, the first requisite is that the teacher have a student-centered approach to instruction; a bachelor's degree, previous adult education experience, and experience in working with groups and with low-income people are also required.

The salaries PCAE pays are not competitive with those of the local school district--two of the JOBS 20 instructors earn between $15,000 and $20,000, and two between $20,000 and $25,000. However, PCAE, unlike the local community college, offers many teachers full-time positions and an attractive benefit package. (JOBS 20 teachers report receiving health benefits, paid vacation, sick leave, and retirement benefits.) Several factors make the JOBS 20 teaching positions particularly desirable: as discussed below, teachers are paid for 35 hours a week, of which 20 are in class; teachers have their own classrooms and do not have to move from one location to another; they have a more stable group of students with better attendance than non-JOBS 20 students, making it possible to plan activities that continue over time and to develop teacher-student rapport; and they have more resources, including opportunities for staff development, at their disposal. (JOBS 20 teachers are paid for 36 hours of staff development activities a year, while other GED teachers are paid for only 24 hours.)

On the other hand, JOBS 20 teachers also have a greater number of administrative responsibilities than other teachers. Officially, the 15 non-instructional hours for which they are paid are divided between five hours of class preparation time (although teachers report spending additional unpaid time on this activity) and ten hours for paperwork and contact with case managers. Teachers are required to complete a monthly evaluation on each student; this entails completing a DES form which asks the teacher to assess the student's motivation, ability to accept criticism, ability to get along with others, attendance, adherence to other rules and policies, and academic progress. Teachers are also required to call each student's case manager once a month (more often if a student is not doing well), as well as to call the case manager if a student has been absent two or three consecutive days. Since each teacher may deal with as many as eight case managers, the amount of time taken up by such contacts can be substantial.

All four JOBS 20 teachers are white and non-Hispanic.[16] The three ABE/GED teachers are all female, while the ESOL teacher is male. The teachers vary in age (two are between 26 and 35 years old, one between 36 and 45, and one over 45) and in educational background (two hold bachelor's degrees, one is working on her Master's degree, and one has a doctorate). All have had at least three years' experience in working with adults outside a college setting, and two of the four teachers had previously held a job in which they worked mainly with welfare recipients.

Teachers have generally made full use of the staff development opportunities available to them.[17] Three of the four teachers had received at least a week of staff development to prepare for their JOBS 20 positions; a good part of this staff development concerned the workings of the JOBS program. All the teachers reported attending conferences for educators since they began teaching at the program, and two said they had attended courses relevant to their job. Three of the four teachers also reported receiving at least 25 hours of staff development in the preceding year on such topics as using graphs and charts, teaching about current events, and helping students with test-taking strategies–although the teachers tended to rate the workshops and other staff development activities they attended as only moderately helpful. Asked the topics on which they would most like a substantial amount of training in the future, three of the four teachers agreed that they would like to know more about linking education to employment.

More informal professional development also occurs among teachers. Because the teachers at El Pueblo and Liberty Learning Centers can easily visit each other and generally do so at least once a week, they tend to share information about lessons and materials that have worked especially well in their classrooms; on occasion, one will try the other's ideas in her own class. The teacher at the El Rio site, which is located several miles from the other two centers, is less likely to participate in this information exchange.

On instructional issues, the JOBS 20 teachers report to the coordinators of the three PCAE learning centers at which their classes are located, while on administrative and attendance issues, they report to the JOBS 20 project coordinator. While these dual lines of reporting could potentially make

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[16]The counselor is of Mexican-American descent and bilingual.

[17]It is worth noting that PCAE makes staff development activities available to support staff and program counselors as well as teachers. For example, the JOBS 20 clerk recently attended a session on effective communications; the JOBS 20 coordinator commented that this would be especially helpful because the clerk is often called on to speak to groups of students.

for conflict, the arrangement seems to work smoothly.

As discussed below, whatever the formal lines of authority, the teachers exercise considerable autonomy within their classrooms, where they also develop close relationships with their students. The four teachers report that they have had one-to-one conversations with all of their students about the students' past educational experiences, goals, or attendance and progress, and they have also talked with the majority of students about the students' personal lives. These factors, along with the relatively ample supply of program resources, make for generally positive feelings among the teachers about their work. Most of the teachers agree that the program is a good place for teachers to work, express considerable satisfaction with their current jobs, and rate staff morale as high. They generally see the program as well managed and believe that the program administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.

Classroom Aides. Each ABE/GED teacher is given up to 30 hours a week of staff time to be divided as she chooses between a clerical aide, who calls in attendance, maintains test score rosters, and handles xeroxing and paperwork, and an instructional aide, who works with individuals or small groups of students and otherwise helps out the teacher. Different teachers have used this allocation in different ways. At one site, for example, the instructional aide works for 10 hours a week, while the clerical aide, who also staffs the computer lab, is scheduled for 15 hours a week. At another site, the instructional aide is well-versed in working with computers and works for 15 hours a week, while the clerical aide is employed for 10 hours.[18] The PCAE clerk, who is stationed at El Pueblo, doubles as the clerical aide for the El Pueblo ABE/GED teacher.

The JOBS 20 Counselor. The JOBS 20 counselor divides her 15 hours a week among the three program sites. At each site, she teaches a life skills class and meets with new students as part of their orientation to the program, as discussed below. She also finds out from the teacher which students seem to be having difficulties and meets individually with students who have personal matters they want to talk about. The teachers estimate that about half their students use such counseling; in some cases, the students seek the counselor out on their own, while in others, they are advised to do so by the teacher. The counselor also makes occasional visits to students' homes.

Much of the counselor's work involves crisis intervention. She refers students who need long-

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[18]The instructional aide at this site is a JOBS 20 program graduate who is now attending community college; the teacher comments that the aide's background enables her to "connect" readily with other students, and the aide also serves as a role model for them.

term counseling to outside clinics or programs and often accompanies them on their first meeting with a therapist.

IV. Inside the Program

A. Orientation and Enrollment

JOBS 20 follows an open enrollment policy. As slots open up for them, new students begin the program on the designated day at each site (the same day that the counselor is scheduled to be there). Before each new student joins her class, she participates in two days of orientation. She receives an overview of the program and its policies, completes the paperwork, takes a tour of the site, and takes the reading comprehension, math concepts, and math computations sections of the Tests of Adult Basic Education.

The new student then meets with the counselor. As the project coordinator explains it, the purpose of this meeting is to make sure that the student is ready to come to school. The coordinator notes that some students do not fully grasp the commitment and responsibility associated with a daily routine. Others students have personal problems–e.g., threatening boyfriends, lack of day care, health issues, lack of suitable clothing–that may hinder attendance. The counselor and student together review a questionnaire designed to identify such barriers; if any exist, the student is referred back to her case manager to resolve the issues before she enrolls in the program. In the meeting, the student is also asked about her feelings about returning to school, her goals for the future, and any personal goals that she would like to realize while attending classes (e.g., being able to help her children with homework).

The teacher and student then review the student's goals and her test results. Finally, both teacher and student sign a contract that sets forth their respective responsibilities with regard to attendance and participation. For example, the student agrees to participate actively and constructively in class activities; the teacher agrees to take an active role in assisting the student to reach her academic goals, through means such as instruction, evaluation, career planning, and assistance in finding counseling when needed. Excessive absenteeism voids the contract.

Students who do not complete the orientation process are not considered to be officially enrolled in the JOBS 20 classes. Staff believe that the two-day orientation, which has been in place for two years, has significantly reduced the dropout rate, especially during the early weeks of participation.[19]

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[19]It is not clear, however, whether the extended orientation has increased the proportion of all clients *referred* to the program who successfully complete it, or whether it simply means that dropping out is now more (continued...)

B. Inside the Classroom

ABE/GED Classes. The three ABE/GED classes encompass both the subjects and the skills tested on the GED exam. Thus, while the teachers place greatest emphasis on reading and writing instruction, they also also cover math, social studies, and science, the other three subject areas included on the test. The teachers also work on helping students to develop the specific skills measured in the test (e.g., identifying the main idea of a reading passage, writing a tightly organized essay). But there is also considerable diversity among the three classrooms.

As one teacher put it, JOBS 20 is successful because it permits teachers the flexibility to teach in a way that suits their individual styles. In response to a question on the teacher survey, the teachers replied that they always or almost always made their own decisions about the selection of texts and other instructional materials, the specific topics and skills to be taught, and the teaching techniques to be employed. It appears that most teachers, especially with respect to reading and writing instruction, select materials that seize their own interest and that they think will be appropriate and interesting for their students. This means that teachers are generally enthused about what they are teaching and are able to communicate that enthusiasm to their students as well.

It also means that what happens in one class on a daily or weekly basis is generally very different from what is going on in the other classes, as is evident from the following descriptions of the language-related activities of the three classes on the three successive days the researcher visited them:

> The El Rio class began, as it always does, with a "warm-up" activity (either English or math). The teacher wrote two sentences laden with punctuation, spelling, and other mistakes on the board (e.g., "mr. j jones and mrs smith my sons teachers asign a lot of homework give eazy tests and field trips"). The students copied the sentences into their notebooks and corrected them, first individually and then as a group. As students suggested changes, the teacher constantly asked the reason for each change; when a student asked whether "field trip" is one word or two, the teacher advised her to look in the dictionary. (The teacher explained to the researcher that this is the primary way in which she teaches writing mechanics.)
>
> Later in the day the class turned to writing. The teacher showed the students a picture and asked them to write about it. She then used the students' writings to discuss the differences between descriptive and narrative modes of writing. She distributed magazines to the group and asked the students to write a "narrative" about a picture of their choice.

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[19](...continued)
likely to occur before rather than after enrollment.

The last few minutes of the class were spent in journal-writing. The teacher began this as a group exercise, but when she realized that people were ready to write on their own, she changed it to an individual activity. The assignment to the students was to write about what the class did that day--not merely to describe what had happened but to discuss what had been learned.

During the past weeks, the Liberty class had talked about proposed changes regarding food stamps, school meals, and welfare. The teacher brought in xeroxed copies of an article that had appeared in a local paper the previous day about proposed cutbacks in funding for low-income housing in Arizona. She asked the class whether anyone had read the article. One student said she had. The teacher asked her what she remembered from the article, and the student replied that she didn't recall much at all. The teacher then said:

> Let's read this together and figure out what it will mean for us here in Pima County and in Arizona. Many of these changes will take place. We don't know the extent of the changes, but it looks like there will be some real cuts. This is something we need to be aware of and prepared for. It's another reason for you to push yourselves ahead as fast as you can so that you won't be dependent on a system that's going down. The last thing we want for you is for the system to be cut before you are able to take care of yourselves. This gives you an incentive to get your GED faster and get into a training program faster, while they're still here. It's a little bit depressing, but it's better to know it than not to know it.

After students had read the article aloud, the teacher asked, "The subject of this article is what?" The article mentioned cutbacks in Section 8 housing certificates, and this led to a discussion of abuses on the part of Section 8 renters. One student said she knew a woman who lives in Mexico and rents out her Section 8-subsidized apartment; another student mentioned Section 8 renters who used drugs and messed up the place. The teacher asked, "Why don't people keep up the property?" This evoked such responses as, "They should get on the people who are abusing it," and (from the instructional aide): "They [Section 8 managers] need to come and inspect. The whole time I was on AFDC--seven years--they never came." The teacher said, "What I'm hearing is that we need a police system...." At that point, a student mentioned that her landlord failed to keep up the property, and after some talk along these lines, the teacher noted, "Now I'm hearing it's not just the tenants, it's also the managers."

A chart in the newspaper article showing current funding levels and funding levels approved by the House and the Senate Appropriations Committee led both to a civics lesson--taught via the Socratic method, with the teacher asking, "What's the House?" "Who is the representative from this district?" "Who can tell me Arizona's two senators?" "What happens when the House and the Senate come up with different versions of what they want?" "After they negotiate an agreement, what happens?" "What happens if the President votes against the agreement? What's it called?" "What has to happen for the President's veto to be overturned?"- and to a quick math lesson in which students calculated the differences between current funding levels for different

housing programs and the levels approved by the House and the Senate committee.

At El Pueblo, the teacher, who describes herself as a "news junkie," had xeroxed copies of a Mike Royko column about the complex considerations associated with gun control. Students then wrote in their notebooks answers to questions the teacher had given them about the article. The questions, which the students discussed in small groups at the tables at which they were seated, asked them to identify the topic and main idea of the article and the main point of the last paragraph, and to state whether or not they agreed with Royko.

The teacher introduced the next activity by asking whether anyone had heard of Edgar Allan Poe. (The name seemed vaguely familiar to a few students; one asked if he had written the book on Hamlet.) The teacher cited Poe as an example of "classical literature" and mentioned that his writings often appeared on the GED test; however, it was clear that she had chosen to conduct a class on Poe because of her fondness for the author. Explaining to the students that she wanted them to be caught up in the drama of the story and not sidetracked by its somewhat antiquated style, she read aloud "The Tell-Tale Heart." The students were spellbound, relating the story afterwards to the works of Stephen King and the films of Vincent Price. The teacher also distributed copies of a newspaper article disputing the common notion that Poe was a drug addict and a drunkard and asked students to answer questions about the article, including the arguments cited in support of a more sympathetic view of the author. She also asked students to match words used in the article (e.g., "legacy," "reinvigorated," "perpetuates") with their correct definitions. Finally, the class read together and briefly discussed a passage from "The Raven" that appears in a GED preparation text. (The passage consisted only of the poem's opening stanzas and was so abbreviated that neither the bird nor the word "Nevermore" appeared in it.)

Along with the obvious differences among the specific activities and personal styles of the three teachers, there are also similarities of method and approach, as discussed below.

- **Classes use a variety of materials; GED workbooks are used primarily to reinforce material that has previously been presented in other ways.**

All the teachers report using published workbooks (e.g., those published by Cambridge, Contemporary, and Steck-Vaughn), worksheets, novels or short stories, newspaper or magazine articles, materials they or other staff members have written, materials about the students' home and/or community environments, audio-visual equipment, computers, and real-life documents. Workbooks and computer-assisted instructional packages are used for "drill and practice," but generally as a supplement to, rather than substitute for, teacher-led presentations of new material.

- **Teachers use diverse teaching modalities.**

Classes mix whole-class instruction with one-to-one interaction with a teacher or tutor, individualized assignments, and work in small groups (including groups in which students teach each other). These activities may go on concurrently as well as sequentially (e.g., the teacher may assign a small group to work on one subject while she leads the class in a different activity). Students spend three hours a week in the computer lab, where they work individually on areas that need strengthening and learn basic word processing; instructional packages used include INVEST and Skills Bank.

- **Lessons take into account students' interests.**

Teachers are responsive to what students want to learn. This means that the curriculum changes over time and with new groups of students. For example, teachers report that this year, many lessons have centered on welfare reform, immigration and citizenship, and the workings of government. Last year, there was considerable interest in learning about gangs and law enforcement efforts, as well as in exploring the students' cultural heritage.

- **Teachers emphasize political empowerment.**

Teachers seek to increase students' political consciousness--to deepen their understanding of the issues and of the importance of their votes. This was an especially important concern last year, when Arizona held primaries and general elections for governor, superintendent of schools, and other offices. Each JOBS 20 class sent letters to and called various local and state candidates running for office; the group efforts resulted in class visits by several office-seekers--among them, two of the gubernatorial candidates--who fielded questions asked by the students. NAFTA was also the topic of much discussion and debate, forcing many students, as American citizens of Mexican descent, to think through their views on the legislation.[20]

PCAE administrators believe that, through involvement in the political process, students can

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[20]Raising political consciousness is a central concern of the JOBS 20 ESOL class as well as of the ABE/GED classes. During the week before the researcher's visit, members of that class had discussed the welfare reform provisions of the Contract with America. As a follow-up activity (one observed by the researcher) the students worked in the computer lab, typing up finished versions of letters they had previously drafted to Arizona Senator John McCain expressing their views that funding for adult education and child care should not be reduced. (Interestingly, the students supported both denial of benefits to teenage mothers and time limits on welfare receipt--despite the fact that many had themselves been on welfare for ten years or more. They tended to attribute their lengthy tenure on aid to not having been "pushed" to get off in the past, but viewed education and child care as essential in enabling them to become financially independent.)

come to see education as a tool for achieving their own interests and ends.

- **Celebrations are an important aspect of class activities.**

Classes regularly have award ceremonies, which are combined with potluck lunches. Certificates (designed and produced in the sites' computer labs) are given for a variety of student achievements, including high attendance and academic performance (including learning gains). Students are also rewarded for accomplishing personal goals they have set for themselves--e.g., regularly reading aloud to their children, or reading a certain number of books.

- **ABE/GED teachers spend relatively little time on topics related to employment--not surprising, given their general orientation toward preparing students to take the GED test.**

All four teachers say that they strongly emphasize teaching important work habits such as punctuality and regular attendance, and the majority give some emphasis to exposing students to various career possibilities. However, most do not stress teaching students how to read and reply to employment ads and job applications, how to write a resume, or how to do well during an employment interview.

Teachers give several explanations for the fact that they do not devote much attention to employment-related issues. First, they note that they don't have the time both to cover the standard GED subjects and to incorporate heavily vocationally-focused materials. Second, they acknowledge that they are not very familiar with vocationally-oriented materials and would require additional training in their use.[21] Third, they believe that students can learn resume preparation and interviewing skills elsewhere (e.g., in DES-sponsored job search programs). Finally, they feel that many students are not ready to think seriously about occupational choices until they have been in the class for some time; they say that students often come to the class with only a few occupational goals in mind but are exposed to new possibilities in the course of their studies.

Life Skills Classes. Topics related to employment are among the many subjects covered by the life skills class. These subjects are largely of the students' own choosing: the instructor asks students to evaluate the class each quarter and to brainstorm about ideas for future classes. Using a variety of approaches (including films and videos, outside speakers from social service and government agencies, and newspaper articles), classes have discussed health issues (e.g., abortion, female cancers, questions

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[21]One teacher says she has examined a number of "math in the workplace" texts and finds most to be of poor quality and to rely heavily on rote exercises.

to ask the physician about medications, HIV and AIDS, health myths and facts), nutrition, parenting, substance abuse, gang violence, handling stress and test anxiety, tenants' rights, and issues related to child support. The instructor also spends a few sessions on consumer economics themes: banking, budgeting, keeping a checkbook, buying on credit. A favorite activity has been the completion of an inventory of personality types, which also discusses the strengths and values as well as effective parenting techniques and learning styles associated with each type of personality.

The life skills class also touches on a number of topics related to employment. The instructor administers an inventory of vocational interests and aptitudes, and students may be asked to research various features of the jobs for which they appear suited–the requisite training, pay scale, and so on. Life skills classes have also included sessions on how to find a job, complete an application, and conduct oneself during an interview. However, according to the project coordinator, some DES case managers do not want JOBS 20 to focus too much on employment-related issues, since DES contracts with other agencies to conduct vocational assessment, job search classes, and provide other services in this area.

C. Monitoring Attendance

JOBS 20 staff have a strong interest in maintaining high attendance. Teachers feel frustrated when students miss out on what is going on when they are absent and absences disrupt group activities and undermine continuity. Furthermore, program funding is partly contingent on students' hours in the classroom. Teachers report that attendance in their classes is typically between 75 and 90 percent.[22]

PCAE receives assured payment from DES for the first 10 slots in each JOBS 20 class (i.e., 40 of the 75 slots are fully supported). Payment for the other 35 slots is at an hourly rate and depends on actual attendance. It therefore behooves program staff members to follow up on absenteeism consistently and with dispatch; it also makes it important to keep excellent attendance records.[23]

Officially, 100 percent attendance is required by the JOBS 20 Program, although students can receive a certificate for good attendance if they attend 85 percent of the time or better. If a student is

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[22]Without a careful examination of attendance data, it is impossible to assess the accuracy of these estimates. It appeared to the researcher that attendance was somewhat lower on the days she visited each class, but this may have been due partly to the fact that several students were taking parts of the GED test. Also, she visited the site the week before students were scheduled for spring break.

[23]Attendance records are maintained both at the central El Pueblo office and at the other two sites. JOBS 20 attendance reports are also sent weekly to the Department of Education in Phoenix, where they are used to determine the amount of reimbursement to which the program is entitled.

going to be absent, she is supposed to call both her DES case manager and the program. Students also sign in each morning. The same afternoon, the clerical aide for each class calls in the attendance to the JOBS 20 clerk at El Pueblo, who in turn calls a contact person at DES. The clerk also reminds the DES contact person if a person has been absent two days in a row without a call. The contact person is responsible for notifying the DES case managers that their clients were absent. Thus, a case manager may well receive two notifications of a student's absence--one from the student herself, one from the JOBS 20 program; in either case, he or she will usually learn of the absence the same day it occurs.

Finally, if a student has been absent two or three consecutive days, whether she has called in or not, her teacher is required to call the case manager to discuss the situation.

It is the case manager, not the teacher, who is responsible for follow-up with absentees; similarly, it is DES, not the JOBS 20 Program, that decides when to drop a student because of poor attendance. Case managers can consult a manual to help them in determining when an absence is excused or unexcused, but there is considerable diversity of interpretation and of action.

Perhaps the major complaint of JOBS 20 staff about the DES case managers concerns the case managers' inconsistent practices with regard to dropping students from the program and their failure to consult the teachers on this issue. Teachers say that some case managers repeatedly give "second chances" to students with both attendance and attitude problems, even when JOBS 20 staff have recommended that the student be dropped. Other case managers will go strictly "by the books" and terminate a student who has attended regularly because she was absent for a reason they do not consider valid, even if the student is close to completing the GED test.

FY 1993-94 data indicate that DES personnel dropped 35 students from their JOBS 20 classes before completing them, primarily because of poor attendance or because they were parents in two-parent cases who had reached the end of their allotted time in the program.[24] These 35 students comprise 17 percent of all students enrolled during the year.

However, neither the extent to which DES case managers remove students from the JOBS 20 classes nor the apparently arbitrary quality of some of their decisions seems to have done severe damage to the essentially positive relationship between staff of the two agencies. It appears, rather, that teachers

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[24]Students dropped from JOBS 20 classes for poor attendance are not necessarily sanctioned. Instead, some case managers place such students in a pending status and reassign them to other JOBS activities, while reserving sanctions for students who are judged to be repeatedly noncompliant. Again, it appears that case managers exercise considerable discretion with respect to the application of sanctions.

and case managers both reinforce the message that attendance is important from their different perspectives: teachers tell the student that she is missing out on learning, while case managers tell her that she is risking a sanction. It is also notable that teachers, despite their client-centered approach, are not particularly disposed to give frequently absent students additional chances, since it is not in the program's financial interest to do so.

D. Measuring Progress

Students' progress through the program is monitored largely through standardized tests, although teachers also say that they rely heavily on their own observations of the students and their work and on student self-assessments. Students are supposed to be routinely tested every 12 weeks with either the TABE or the GED predictor test, and the teacher includes any test results in her monthly report to DES on each student's status.[25]

The JOBS 20 Program used part of its funding to develop a computerized system for keeping track of students' scores on the TABE and GED predictor tests over time. At the time of the researcher's visit, data on TABE test and retest scores were available for 20 students of the 167 students listed on the file.[26]

The data indicate that while most students made gains over time, these gains were, on average, quite small in reading, although larger in math. Thus, 18 of the 20 students with two TABE scores achieved gains of at least two-tenths of a grade level equivalent: nine did so on both the reading and the math test, two on the reading test only, and seven on the math test only. Among those who registered increases, these could be quite sizable, given the limited time period: a full grade equivalent in reading and 1.5 grade equivalents in math. However, students' test scores could, and did, decrease or remain unchanged, as well as rise. Among all students with pre- and post-test scores, the average increase in reading level was .375 grade equivalent (from 8.13 to 8.51), while in math, it was 1.1 grade equivalent (from 6.63 to 7.73).

Passing the GED test remained a sizable hurdle even for many students who had been in the

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[25]Teachers decide when to schedule a student for the GED predictor test based on TABE score increases and on the student's own sense of readiness.

[26]Data for other students indicated a TABE score and a GED predictor score or, in some instances, two GED predictor scores. A substantial number of students' test records indicated only one test score. In some cases, students had not been enrolled long enough to be retested. In the other cases, it is possible that some students left the program early, before they were slated to be retested, or that retesting did not always occur on schedule.

program for some time. Of 32 students who took the GED predictor test, 19 (60 percent) achieved scores suggesting that they would have passed the actual exam. Among those who did not pass the predictor test, eight students failed to achieve the minimum score of 35 on at least one of the five subject areas tested, most commonly math or literature; the other five passed all of the subjects but did not score high enough to achieve the requisite average of 45 on the entire battery.

Program data for the 1993-94 fiscal year indicate that 22 percent of the 204 students enrolled in the program during the year received their GED certificate. Another 5 percent had completed and passed the pre-GED test and had started on the official GED test or were waiting for the GED test results; PCAE considers these students to have successfully completed their objectives.[27] On average, these students attended the program for 304 hours, equating to just over 15 weeks of full-time attendance. Teachers and administrators, in contrast, assert that it generally takes six to eight months for students to earn a GED. It seems plausible that some students are ready to take the test quickly, while for others, much more time is required; the average may not accurately reflect the JOBS 20 experience of either of these groups.

All these findings suggest that acquiring the academic skills tested on standardized instruments (i.e., the TABE, the GED exam) is a gradual and often slow process for many adult learners. For some, it may appear glacially slow. Thus, while all four teachers, in response to an item on the teacher survey, strongly agreed that they were making a difference in their students' lives, three of them agreed with the statement that, with respect to mastering the material covered in class, "All of my students can succeed, but some will take much longer than others," and two felt that "Some students are unlikely to succeed ever." (One teacher responded that both statements were equally expressive of her beliefs.)

E. Leaving JOBS 20

Data are available on the status of the 204 students enrolled in JOBS 20 classes in FY 1993-94 at the end of the fiscal year.[28] These students can be grouped into five categories:

- 35 students (17 percent), as noted above, were dropped by DES for poor attendance, or, in the case of TPEP students, because they had reached the end of their time limit in the program;

- 61 students (30 percent) were considered to have successfully completed their

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[27]It should be pointed out that 63 of the 204 students were still in the program at the end of the fiscal year, so that the total number of students earning a GED is probably greater than these figures suggest.

[28]Systematic data are not maintained on JOBS 20 students' post-program activities, although former students sometimes drop by the program and staff learn about their doings in this way.

objectives; this figure includes the 54 students who either earned their GED certificates or had passed the GED predictor test and started on the official test or were waiting for results, as well as 7 other students who did not take the GED test (e.g., because they already had a high school diploma) but substantially increased their level of academic skills;

- 63 students (31 percent) were still enrolled at the end of the year and were rolled over into the next fiscal year;
- 17 students (8 percent) left the program to take a job; and
- 28 students (14 percent) dropped out of the program because of personal or family problems (e.g., health and child care problems) or for other reasons (e.g., transportation difficulties, lack of interest).

The Arizona JOBS Program allows AFDC recipients to participate in post-secondary education programs (e.g., community college, vocational training) of up to two years' duration,[29] and JOBS 20 instructors often encourage program graduates to continue their studies at Pima Community College. This is sometimes a point of contention between the teachers and DES staff. The teachers assert that DES case managers often pressure clients to take a shorter route off of welfare--to get a job after earning their GED or to enroll in a short-term certificate program lasting six to nine months. Either course of action, in the teachers' view, is likely to result in a low-paying job that does not offer fringe benefits. DES case managers, however, are concerned that the teachers will, in the words of one, "plant a seed in the client's mind" that is not in line with the client's employability plan and with the two-year policy. The case managers say that they emphasize to clients that they can continue their educations once they are off AFDC.

V. Facing the Future

Whether the JOBS 20 program approach that has evolved over the last three years will require modification in the face of recent DES policy initiatives is an open question.

One such initiative, discussed earlier in the paper, is the increase in the level of participation expected of JOBS enrollees to 30 hours a week, effective since the beginning of 1995. As noted above,

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[29]It is noteworthy that JOBS enrollees are allowed to take one semester of remedial classes without having the semester count against the two-year limit. This policy seems an important recognition on the part of DES officials that many students who are recent graduates of GED programs need additional developmental instruction before they will are able to handle college-level work (see Quint and Musick, 1994).

both PCAE and local DES staff believed that JOBS 20 enrollees were exempt from this increase. However, at a meeting involving state JOBS officials and local JOBS office staff members that was held as part of the researcher's visit to the site, the state officials informed local staff members that JOBS 20 students, like other JOBS enrollees, are expected to engage in JOBS activities for a full 30 hours weekly. How this new understanding will affect the JOBS 20 students and classes, as well as interagency relationships, is unclear at this point.

A more serious challenge to the operation of JOBS 20 arises from imminent changes in the design of the state's AFDC program. The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services approved Arizona's request for a welfare waiver, which was slated to go into effect November 1, 1995. Among its provisions, the waiver specifies that able-bodied AFDC recipients may receive cash assistance for only two years in any five-year period. In the face of such a time limit, it seems unlikely that welfare recipients will be allowed to remain indefinitely in JOBS 20, and questions about who would be eligible for JOBS 20, the scale at which it would operate, and the program's thrust might all need to be renegotiated.

CHAPTER 6

THE FOUR PROGRAMS COMPARED: MAJOR DIFFERENCES AND SHARED "PROMISING PRACTICES"

The programs profiled in this report have sharply etched identities. It is unlikely that a visitor who spent a couple of days sitting in on classes and talking to teachers at one program would confuse it with another study site. The distinctiveness of the programs, and the clarity of their individual missions, is a source of their strength.

Despite their unique identities, certain shared features and practices characterize all of the programs and appear important in producing a solid, rewarding educational experience for students. This chapter considers both the differences among the programs and the common threads that bind them together–including a future fraught with uncertainty.

I. Program Differences: Where Work Fits In

The missions of the programs considered in this report are quite different. This difference is most pronounced with respect to their orientation toward employment. All the programs encourage their students to view employment as a highly preferred alternative to welfare receipt. The difference lies in the timeframe within which the programs expect students to start working and the extent to which employment-related content informs the curriculum.

The programs in San Diego and Brooklyn both emphasize **employment** as a short-term goal of education, although within this general rubric, their specific approaches differ. The Brooklyn College BEGIN Work/Study Program, dealing as it does with students at relatively low levels of literacy, focuses on general **work readiness**–awareness of occupational areas and of the norms of the workplace. Thus, classroom activities center on learning about the credentials, skills, and personal qualities required for working in health care, child care, and office settings and in occupations that are nontraditional for women, while the work experience component provides first-hand exposure to employers' expectations with respect to attendance and performance. The program's guidelines call for it to place 10 percent of enrollees directly into jobs either before or after they have completed classroom instruction, and to direct another 50 percent into group job search, short-term training, or further education. Thus, while immediate post-program employment is not the goal for most students, the thrust is on follow-up

activities that will lead to employment sooner rather than later.

In contrast, placing program graduates immediately into jobs is the principal goal of the San Diego Vocational ABE (VABE) Program. Thus, the program, which enrolls a group of students who have been screened for both strong basic skills and motivation, focuses on **instruction in specific vocational skills** in demand in the labor market. Language skills classes, for instance, cover such topics as business terminology and the drafting of business letters and memoranda. In addition to their academic classes, students attend classes in keyboarding, accounting, business machines, office procedures, and other skills to enable them to get entry-level office positions.

The programs in Philadelphia and Tucson do not urge students to look for work immediately after they "graduate." Rather, they encourage students to pursue further education and training, in the belief that via these routes, students are more likely to get better-paying jobs that will enable them not only to get off welfare but to stay off.

The mission of these two programs might, rather, be described as **personal and political empowerment**. The Workstart program operated by the Community Women's Education Project in Philadelphia has a quite explicit feminist and multicultural ideology. The Pima County Adult Education JOBS 20 Program has not taken so ideological a stand. However, the philosophical commitment of both programs to empowerment emerges in many ways: the celebration of cultural diversity in the curriculum and in the classroom in general; the involvement of students in making important program decisions (e.g., class schedules, staff hiring); and the emphasis on helping students organize to produce political and institutional change.

The divergence between these two orientations may also help explain the differences in the length of time that students in the programs can remain enrolled. The San Diego and Brooklyn programs are of relatively short duration: the VABE class at one San Diego study site and the concurrent education and training program at the second site are each approximately six months long[1], while the Brooklyn College BEGIN Work Study Program is about five months (20 weeks) long. A relatively short length of stay may help to remind students that their objective is to learn as much as possible in as brief a time as possible and then to move into the labor market, or into more direct preparation for employment. The Philadelphia program, in contrast, is nine months (two semesters) long, and single parents can remain

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[1]Students in regular ABE and GED classes in San Diego are permitted to remain indefinitely as long as they continue to make adequate progress.

enrolled in Tucson's JOBS 20 programs as long as their teachers judge them to be making good progress.[2]

The programs also differ along other dimensions. These include: the precise division of responsibilities between welfare department and education program personnel; the cultural backgrounds and experience and credentials of staff members; the programs' scale; and the institutional auspices under which they operate. These differences are relatively minor, however, in comparison to those outlined above and do not line up along any neat divide. They are also minor in comparison to the many important shared elements that contribute to program quality. It is to these commonalities that the discussion now turns.

II. Common Features and Promising Practices

A **clear sense of mission and purpose** imbues each program, informing program operations and providing teachers with a clear sense of what they are supposed to do and accomplish. It helps define the content of lessons and of the critical messages that program staff try to instill in their students. At some sites, this clarity of purpose is reinforced through the use of **performance contracts** which set forth specific numerical goals for educational or job placement outcomes, and, equally important, **timeframes** for achieving those goals. The contracts help to keep teachers focused on what they and their students are expected to achieve, and within what time period.

While the decision to serve JOBS enrollees brought new challenges, it also resulted in a sizable increase in resources at all the study sites. (In Tucson, it will be recalled, the average annual budget was $850 for each JOBS 20 student, compared with $150 per non-JOBS 20 student served by the agency.) **Additional funding has made it possible for the programs under study not only to reach different populations but also to expand existing services and to try new approaches.**

At all four sites, these funds have made it possible to establish **separate classes exclusively for JOBS students**. The South Bay GAIN Learning Lab in San Diego and the Brooklyn College programs operate as free-standing entities where only students enrolled in JOBS walk through the door. The GAIN Lab at San Diego's Mid-City Continuing Education Center, Workstart in Philadelphia, and the JOBS 20

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[2]A stringent six-month limit that starts from the date that the individual applies for public assistance is, however, imposed on students--usually men--in two-parent AFDC-Unemployed Parent cases. Such students have traditionally been deemed capable of immediate employment.

classes in Tucson all operate within larger institutions that serve both JOBS and non-JOBS students; however, JOBS students attend special JOBS-only classes in the same physical plants as their non-JOBS counterparts.

In San Diego and Brooklyn, JOBS-only classes were an integral feature of the program design from the start; in Philadelphia and Tucson, experience has led program operators to change from classes that included both JOBS and non-JOBS students to ones exclusively for JOBS enrollees. These JOBS-only classes have served at least three purposes. First, they have fostered a feeling of identity and esprit de corps, a recognition among the students that they face similar problems and have similar goals and aspirations. Students freely encourage each other to succeed and buoy each other up through moments of anxiety and disappointment. Second, JOBS-only classes have enabled teachers and others to respond to students' special situations and to deliver a uniform message about the purposes of JOBS education. Third, such classes have enabled the programs to avoid the invidious distinctions that would be likely to arise if students subject to JOBS' relatively stringent rules (e.g., with regard to attendance) were mixed with students not bound by these rules.

JOBS resources have further enabled the programs to hire **skilled, experienced teachers**. A variety of incentives appear to have been used successfully to create good working conditions and to attract high-quality cadres of instructors who are strongly supported by program administrators. Some incentives are financial: these include competitive pay scales, full-year contracts and full-time positions (at all programs except the one in Philadelphia), and good fringe benefit packages. Others relate to the quality of the instructors' work environment–e.g., having a relatively stable group of students, an adequate budget for books and materials, and a classroom and desk to call one's own.[3]

The programs under study have also used JOBS monies to foster **staff development**. Teachers are encouraged to participate in in-service training and outside seminars and classes to increase their knowledge of their disciplines and of innovative and effective ways of communicating that knowledge, and paid time is made available for them to attend such activities.

Classes in the programs under study are characterized by **well-planned and varied instructional activities**. Teachers employ a variety of instructional techniques–including computer-assisted instruction (CAI), other individual activities, whole-class and small-group teaching, and cooperative learning–that

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[3]In many adult education programs, instructors teach classes in several different locations and must carry their books and materials with them from place to place.

keep students interested and motivated. Computers are used extensively in some of the programs, but never exclusively. (In contrast, some welfare education programs rely largely on a single instructional modality–e.g., CAI or working in individual workbooks–an approach that is more likely to lead to student "burn-out" and that may be ineffective with some students who might learn better in other ways.)

All the programs are further marked by **a good working relationship and frequent communication with the local JOBS program at both the policy-making and practitioner levels**. Thus, the schools have successfully adjusted their program offerings both to meet specific JOBS requirements (e.g., with respect to hours of attendance) and to reflect the general message that the local JOBS program is seeking to deliver. JOBS case managers and program instructors also work closely together to resolve issues concerning individual students at all sites except Philadelphia (where CWEP social workers perform the tasks carried out elsewhere by JOBS staff).

An **emphasis on regular attendance** is both a correlate and a marker of this good working relationship. Attendance is a priority for both the JOBS program (because of its mandatory nature) and the education programs (because programs are reimbursed in part on the basis of average daily attendance). At all programs, absenteeism is followed up quickly, usually by the JOBS case manager and sometimes by the instructor or another education program staff member. Follow-up often occurs on the same day as the absence, and home visits are employed if necessary to ascertain and seek to address the reasons for frequent absenteeism. While sanctions are infrequently imposed, the threat of sanctions is used at all sites except Philadelphia to induce absentees to return to the classroom.

In conformity with JOBS guidelines, the programs under study offer **more scheduled instructional hours** than do many adult education programs, including others serving JOBS enrollees. At all the programs, students are scheduled to attend for at least 20 hours a week.

Regular attendance, a relatively long school day, and teaching approaches that engage instructors with their students all make for **a high degree of teacher-student and student-student interaction**. Teachers and students get to know each other well, so that teachers are able to recognize students' strengths as well as their areas of weakness. Affective bonds with their teachers and friendships with and peer pressure from their fellow learners may keep some students coming to class.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that in all probability, these "best practices" are mutually reinforcing. For example, a focus on both high attendance and the hiring of skilled instructors is more likely to result in student success than is an exclusive concern with one or the other.

III. Facing an Uncertain Future

Welfare-to-work programs aimed at increasing the self-sufficiency of AFDC recipients have been the cornerstone of welfare reform efforts since 1967. During the intervening period, the rhetoric and philosophy underlying these programs have swung, pendulum-like, between an emphasis on services to improve welfare recipients' "human capital" and a focus on their immediate entry into employment. The JOBS legislation, which placed a high priority on adult education and job skills training, represented the ascendancy of the human capital development approach.

That ascendancy has ended. Three trends are evident in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, the latest round of welfare reform at the federal level. First, states have a greater say in defining the rules under which both cash assistance and welfare-to-work programs operate than has previously been the case. Second, time limits have been imposed on the length of time most families can receive federally assisted welfare. Finally, the Act makes clear the legislators' intention that the welfare rolls be reduced quickly, and they have seen mandatory job search and immediate job placement as the best ways of accomplishing this objective. While it appears that job search-focused welfare-to-work programs are the best means of reducing welfare receipt in the short term, it is not so evident that they offer a permanent route out of poverty.[4]

In this political climate, the place of adult education is distinctly ancillary. The Act permits attendance in adult education classes or occupational training to count toward a general participation requirement for only 20 percent of the caseload--including teenage parents, who are required to attend high school or an alternative education program as a condition of receiving aid.

Although these case studies were completed before the provisions of the welfare reform legislation had been clearly articulated, the programs under study were already feeling the effects of an increasingly conservative political climate. The San Diego and Brooklyn programs were threatened by cutbacks in referrals and funding; participation rules were tightening for students in the Tucson program. The Philadelphia program appeared to be in a stronger position, since the program director had recently accepted a position of authority with the city's Private Industry Council, which operates the JOBS program in Pennsylvania. However, the new law could call the very existence of the education programs

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[4]The evaluation of the JOBS program now being conducted by MDRC for the federal government includes a direct, head-to-head test of the effectiveness of the "labor force attachment" and "human capital development" approaches for moving welfare recipients toward economic independence.

for welfare recipients in all four sites into question.

The direction in which the political pendulum will swing in the future is uncertain. Nonetheless, both policy and practice can be informed by the experience of programs like those described in this book, which appear to hold significant promise for improving the life prospects of welfare recipients.

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